Tennis Wimbledon

Sampras serves vintage game

Stephen Bierley

RATIONING was in force the last time a Frenchman appeared in the Wimbledon men's singles final, Yvon Petra winning the title in the grey austerity of 1946. Cedric Pioline had hoped to emulate his fellow countryman last Sunday but Pete Sampras imposed his own strict quota, winning his fourth title on Centre Court by 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 in 1hr 34min of implacably controlled dominance.

This was the 25-year-old American's 10th Grand Slam tournament victory, placing him fourth overall with Bill Tilden of the United States — one behind Rod Laver of Australia and Sweden's Bjorn Borg and two short of another Australian, Roy Emerson.

His fourth Wimbledon title in five years equalled Laver's total and, of the modern winners, places him one short of Borg.

This was vintage Sampras — not a trace of self-doubt or a hint of weakness. The only time he became a fraction tentative was while serving in the third set at 4-3. His right arm tightened a little as the trophy glinted on the near horizon. At deuce he double-faulted for the first time since his quarter-final victory over Boris Becker.

And how the Centre Court cheered, attempting to rouse the subdued Pioline for one huge and final effort to extend the match and perhaps take a set off the world's undoubted No 1.

The opportunity was there but Pioline mis-hit a forehand and as quickly as the chance arose it disappeared. Two more serves and the two-game gap had been re-instated; one more service game and the title belonged to Sampras.

"For me it all boils down to just four tournaments a year," he said. "I just love winning the major championships and, if I stay fit and happy, I believe I can beat Emerson's record."

Few would doubt him. He has now won his last three Grand Slam finals in straight sets. He usually has at least one awkward match per tournament but clearly peaks for the finals to such an extent that his opponents are rapidly demoralised. Here it was Petr Korda, the Monte Carlo-based Czech, who extended Sampras to five sets in the fourth round, although even then the left-hander's resistance served to sharpen the American's backhand. Pioline tried to attack it last Sunday and was given short shrift.

Sampras's one current regret — apart from having to play too much tennis — is that he does not have a constant rival, particularly now that Andre Agassi has turned his back on the game. For Sampras the real final here was against Becker, who after his quarter-final defeat announced that this would be his last Wimbledon. There are only between a dozen and 20 players in the men's game who are genuinely comfortable on grass, and none can compare with Sampras at Sunday's exalted level.



Sealed with a kiss . . . Sampras plants a smacker on the trophy after winning his fourth Wimbledon singles title PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE CALLOW

Pioline, who lost the 1993 US Open final 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 to Sampras in the Frenchman's only other major final, must have feared what was coming — and when it did there was precious little he could do.

Above all, Pioline needed a good start. But he double-faulted immediately. The Frenchman, his nerves raw, managed to cling on to that opening service game but then lost his second, the American clinching the game with a scintillating backhand which seared down the line. One break was enough, as it was in the final set. In all Pioline won only 16 points on the Sampras serve.

It was obviously disappointing as Pioline had two days before won a marvellous semi-final against Germany's Michael Stich, the 1991 champion, by virtue of a peacock's tail of vivid returns. Sampras's serve was simply too powerful and varied to permit a second helping.

Just occasionally Pioline's backhand flashed a potent reminder of happier days, one in the second set being the hardest struck shot of the final. But this was only a tiny glint of the Frenchman's unquestionable talent; the rest was hidden by Sampras's massive shadow.

On one occasion Cyclops, the electronic device that measures the length of a serve, went off with no ball in play. It was as if the ghost of Yvon Petra had suddenly strayed on to Centre Court to offer Pioline encouragement.

In truth it needed a malevolent poltergeist to strike Sampras's right arm numb in order to save him, although Pioline could perhaps comfort himself that nobody else in the original draw, seeded or unseeded, would have done much better.

● The Woodies became the most successful tennis partnership of the 20th century when the two Australians won the men's doubles for the fifth time in a row. Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge beat Paul Haarhuis and Jacco Eltingh of the Netherlands 7-6, 7-6, 5-7, 6-3.

The women's doubles saw a happy outcome to a reunion. Natasha Zvereva (Belarussia) and Gigi Fernandez (US) regained the title by beating Nicole Arendt (US) and Manon Bollegraf (Neth) 7-6, 6-4, having reformed their successful partnership. It was their fourth Wimbledon title.

In the mixed doubles the holders Cyril Suk and Helena Sukova of the Czech Republic became the first family partnership to win it twice. The brother-sister combination beat Andre Olhovsky (Russia) and Larisa Neiland (Latvia) 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Swiss Miss Hingis is teen queen

THIS time the Duchess of Kent did not need to send her jacket to the dry cleaners for the removal of tear stains, *writes Stephen Bierley.*

Jana Novotna, who so famously broke down and wept after losing a final she should have won against Steffi Graf in 1993, gave of her very best against Martina Hingis last Saturday and lost not because of any mental frailty but because her 16-year-old opponent was ultimately too good.

And so Hingis became the first Swiss to win the Wimbledon women's singles title and the youngest this century. The previous year she had become the youngest player to claim a Wimbledon title when she and Helena Sukova won the doubles. She is remarkable.

The early part of the tournament this year was so dominated by talk of Venus Williams and Anna Kournikova that Hingis was almost sidelined. It suited her well enough and she reached the final with barely a flicker of trouble or doubt.

Perhaps it was her defeat by Croatia's Iva Majoli in the French Open final that led some to believe she was vulnerable. Certainly the argument that she might struggle on grass did not hold water, although there was enough of that lying about.

Hingis was junior Wimbledon champion (the youngest ever) in 1994, and at senior level here had only ever lost to Graf, beaten by the German in the first round two years ago and the fourth round last year. On both occasions Graf went on to triumph.

The moment Graf pulled out with a knee injury the title was Hingis's for the taking. This was Novotna's third Grand Slam final and her third defeat. "Do it next year," a fan yelled after her 2-6, 6-3, 6-3 defeat. It seems unlikely but the Czech certainly played wonderfully well, notably in the first set when she won the first four games. "I felt like a beginner," said Hingis who, on the second changeover, walked back to her seat at snail's pace, deep in thought.

As well as being a supremely gifted player Hingis has the priceless ability to think on her feet, to work out what to do next if the tide is running against her.

Novotna's heavy backhand slice and feline anticipation at the net initially overwhelmed Hingis, but her brain continued to tick away. Eventually a series of tantalising lobs, interspersed with searing backhand passes down the line, began, slowly but surely, to undermine Novotna's previous dominance.

The second set break was delightfully contrived, although Novotna was far from finished and came within a point of a 3-0 lead in the deciding set. Her failure to nail down what might have been a decisive advantage owed everything to the brilliance of Hingis's play and little to any loss of nerve by Novotna.

Cryptic crossword by Plodge

Across

1,16 down, 24 Short word, traced to Jude the Obscure? Spot on! (4,4,3,6,7)
9 Possibly stick Yorick in the original Hamlet cast (7)
10 Wraith revealed respect recently refused (7)
11 Tile fixed with 2 in preparation for a rainy day (9)
12 Often past being a little tight (5)
13 Dog barked for so long (4)
14 Eastenders may say there's no harm in outfits such as these (10)
16 The doughboy's note brought five bob on account (6,4)
19 Grumpy companion, little 16 down, took last cut (4)
21 Being put right by 16 down saved one's bacon (5)
22 The virgin ways of Lucy? (9)
24 See 1 across
25 Popular head tutor of stage school wrote a prelude (7)
26 Uncommon attachment for a 16 down? (11)

Down

1 A skilful sailor, yet master of no craft (4,2,3,6)
2 A baby 16 down with enterprise? (5)
3 The style of Sykes' routeing instructions! (7)
4 Spartan Jane, endlessly regarding (7)
5 16 downs may have to make some cuts here (8)
6 Decline to enter a redesigned Concorde (7,8)
7 Remedy for Scotsman dismissed from 16 down (6)
8 Look up! The Spaniard's in it for scraps! (6)
15 Dawn breaks on repeat TV series for Rover (8)
16 See 1 across
17 Obligatory form of duty for dancing (non-u) deb (7)
18 Windows, maybe, vetting centres in the net (7)
20 A man who raised his son in Cumbria (6)
23 Beat the opposition party (5)

Last week's solution

G O R
DOMAIN OFFENCES
I A D F B O I
SONNET ETRUSCAN
B G D H T A E
ARRANGEMENT
N O X H A M A
DOVECOT ORLEANS
S E A R O N S
BLACKBEAUTY
A H A N N R R
CHERRIES WAPITI
T R E O B N A
SABOTEUR FLAGON
S S E

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Spanish revolted by ETA execution

Alex Duval Smith in Ermua and Adela Gooch

MORE than a million people took to the streets of Spain this week in condemnation of the Basque guerrilla movement ETA, after a young politician kidnapped and shot by the separatists died in hospital last Sunday from gunshot wounds to the head.

Although most of the mass demonstrations were peaceful, anger turned to violence in the northern city of Pamplona, where there were fierce clashes between supporters and opponents of ETA.

Police in riot gear intervened and, at one point, fired rubber bullets at youths who tried to storm the headquarters of ETA's political wing, Herri Batasuna.

The murder also brought international condemnation. The Pope denounced the killing of the 29-year-old Basque town councillor, Miguel Angel Blanco. France called it "cowardly".

"After this murder, ETA is more isolated than ever," Basque political leaders said. "If they were not loved yesterday, they are despised today."

The kidnapping of Blanco, a councillor for the conservative Popular party (PP) of the prime minister, José Maria Aznar, was a direct challenge to the government. It came in response to a serious blow suffered by ETA earlier this month, when police freed a prison officer held hostage by the group for a year and a half.

Blanco's body lying in state

Those who captured Blanco as he was returning to work after lunch on Thursday last week knew they had set an impossible condition for his release: the relocation of 600 Basque prisoners in jails throughout Spain to prisons in the Basque country within 48 hours.

The same demand had been made in the kidnapping of the prison officer, José Antonio Ortega Lara. His release, after 523 days, was greeted with elation.

The murder was the act of a desperate organisation that knows its support is waning. Basques themselves feel increasing revulsion at ETA violence, and protest movements flourish.

Blanco, whose very ordinariness has inspired an unprecedented show of Spanish national unity against ETA, was buried in his home town on Monday in an atmosphere seething with revenge.

Combative rhetoric from Mr Aznar, in a live television address in the hours before the funeral, failed to defuse the anger of thousands of people lining the streets of Ermua, an industrial dormitory town 50km east of Bilbao in northern Spain, populated almost entirely by non-Basques.

All over Spain people observed 10 minutes silence at noon, standing still on the pavements and in offices. Madrid and Barcelona were both reported to have more than a million protesters on the streets. In the Basque towns of Bilbao and San Sebastian, protesters and ETA supporters fought pitched battles.



No more killing . . . mourners in Ermua give a clear message to Basque ETA separatists PHOTOGRAPH: LLUIS GENE

King Juan Carlos, making a rare televised address, said he had "followed with great emotion the condemnation of terrorism throughout Spain", and added: "The Spanish have given an unsurpassable example of civility and unity. I would tell them that the death of Miguel Angel has not been in vain, and to continue fighting in this endless struggle for democracy, liberty and human rights."

Before travelling to Ermua with dozens of national dignitaries for the funeral of his PP councillor, Mr Aznar promised an immediate crackdown on terrorism and warned of "painful days ahead".

The reaction has given Mr Aznar and his hardline interior minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, carte blanche for a clampdown.

"Those who only know how to kill, those who only know how to kidnap, will continue to do it, but . . . without a doubt, we are going to win," Mr Aznar said on television.

ETA is controlled by a new generation of hardliners whose ideology sits uneasily with the middle-class values of many supporters. Nevertheless, at the last election Herri Batasuna won just under 12 per cent of the vote in the Basque country as a whole, and nearly 20 per cent in the border region with France.

The extent of the protests against Blanco's murder suggests that ETA may have gone too far even for those in the Basque country who remain reluctant to condemn the group.

ETA, an acronym for Basque Homeland and Freedom, began its campaign of violence 29 years ago to combat the ferocious centralising policy of General Franco that stifled Basque culture, language and political traditions.

Since the arrival of democracy after Franco's death in 1975, the Basque country and Catalonia have enjoyed a strong measure of autonomy. Basques have gradually abandoned support for ETA — more than half the population no longer votes for specifically nationalist parties, signalling that devolution has gone far enough for them.

The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) remains the largest in the region with just under 40 per cent of the vote. It condemns violence but advocates an independent Basque state.

Mr Aznar relies on the PNV to support his minority government in parliament. In return, he has revived the Basques' ancient right to collect and spend taxes. But he has put the PNV on the spot over terrorism. He has continued the Socialist policy of dispersing Basque prisoners to jails throughout the country, but instead of trying to get them to renounce violence in return for shorter sentences, he insists they serve their full terms.

Comment, page 12

Cambodia in grip of fear and despondency

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Phnom Penh

LIKE many others draped on Phnom Penh airport's perimeter fence, Rithi, a student aged 20, wants to join the exodus of foreigners from Cambodia. "I am afraid of the return of communism," he said sadly.

"I am afraid of the return of war," said a worker nearby. "Business is finished," sighed a restaurant owner gesturing at the departing clientele, "Freedom is finished."

A week after the violent removal from office of the first prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the capital wallows in despondency and fear. Banks and many shops are still not open for business. The streets are empty and silent at night.

Rumours say there will be more fighting this week, though they don't specify between whom or why. But even if there is none, many worry that the co-prime minister and coup leader, Hun Sen, is turning the clock back to the late 1980s when he and his formerly communist Cambodian People's party ran the country.

There are few enough opposition leaders left to defy him. Some 15 MPs from Prince Ranariddh's royalist party, Funcinpec, are now thought to have fled the country. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of party officials are on the run, sleeping in different places, fearing arrest and worse, according to independent observers.

The press is no happier in a country where journalists critical of Mr Hun Sen have died violent deaths in the past. Since his coup, some journalists have also left the country, and all 19 independent or opposition newspapers have ceased publishing.

Hanoi's cautious statement backing Cambodia's admission to southeast Asia's regional club Asean — in effect a statement backing Hun Sen, its former protégé — will hardly reassure a population that nurses a strong mistrust of Vietnam.

Hun Sen now has a propaganda offensive going. He insists that nothing has changed in Cambodia except the departure of Prince Ranariddh — not the constitution, not the system of two prime ministers, not the multi-party system.

But Hun Sen's record to date is not reassuring. The number of royalist military or security chiefs shot by his forces since the coup is put at six, although some reports speak of as many as 25 of Prince Ranariddh's supporters killed in custody.

Funcinpec is expected to choose a new first prime minister this week, and CPP officials are confident they have sufficient MPs in Phnom Penh to provide a quorum for Hun Sen to reconvene parliament, possibly next week. First order of business, after formally dumping Prince Ranariddh, will be a series of bills to prepare the way for elections.

Few foreign governments, however critical they may be of Hun Sen, show much enthusiasm for backing Prince Ranariddh.

● Sam Rainsy, leader of the Khmer Nation party, called on his supporters to resist Hun Sen. "We have agreed to join the resistance with the Funcinpec," he said at the Thai border town of Aranyaprathet on Tuesday.

Le Monde, page 13
Washington Post, page 16

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 8.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

New Labour brings same old policy to N Ireland

EVEN as a 20-plus year expatriate, I shared in the delight of many British people in the early morning of May 2 as the votes rolled in and it became obvious that the next government would be formed by the Labour party.

Finally, a change and a chance for a fresh approach to both external and internal policies from a Labour party that appeared to be in touch with their supporters. Indeed, the first few weeks in power seemed almost too good to be true. I applauded the new Labour government's first initiatives on handguns, global greenhouse gas emissions, windfall taxes, etc. "New" Labour seemed to have inspired "new" soccer, "new" cricket, "new" rugby and "new" tennis as the tide of enthusiasm in Britain and things British appeared to turn.

Then came a real-world test: Drumcree, Garvaghy Road and the start of the Ulster loyalists' "marching season" in the north of Ireland. My hopes were raised that Tony Blair and his government might really have learnt from history and would make a difference with a more enlightened *modus operandi*. Alas, he proved just as English as the Tories before him, and caved in just like them to old colonial ways. He even mimicked their reliance on letting the police and army communicate to the nationalist protesters, ie, no communication, just heavy-handed action.

So, as is so common in Britain, it is back to business as usual at Westminster as far as the Ulster "problem" is concerned. I won't get fooled again!
Jeff Corkill,
Cheney, Washington, USA

THERE are thousands of miles of roads in Northern Ireland where Orangemen could march without let or hindrance, and there are plenty of housing estates where they would be fêted as heroes. Yet they have to parade along routes that just happen to pass by or through areas where these marches are not welcome.

For what other purpose could the annual rallies be but to emphasise the dominance of their tradition and culture over that of their historic enemy? To show them who remains boss?

Mo Mowlam should establish the principle that no parade can proceed past areas where these are unwelcome. The concept of consent is considered dangerous in many areas of Northern Ireland. But until this notion is adopted and backed up by the full might of government, the sight of the Northern Ireland Secretary marching to and fro on an annual basis frantically trying to arrange an unachievable compromise will become a tradition in itself.
R Crangle,
Address supplied

IF THE nationalists in Belfast had any sense they would ignore the loyalist parades, which most people in Britain and elsewhere consider to be childish anyway.

They look like overgrown schoolboys marching along in their bowler hats: this is the sort of thing that we did when we were at infant school. It really is time that all people in Northern Ireland started looking forward instead of harking back 300 years.
Name and address supplied

Peacekeeping soldiers of war

YOUR headline "Peacekeeping 'torturers' go on trial" (June 29) should have had the inverted commas around the "peacekeeping", not "torturers". That this behaviour occurred among a number of national groups suggests a brutalisation of "ordinary" men by armies whatever their race or creed (and suggests that this behaviour is probably far more common than anyone would admit).

Would these men do this in their own countries? I don't know anything about recruitment and training for armed forces, but I wonder what questions are asked of soldiers about their attitudes to race, to colour, to their roles. And what were their bosses doing? That these abuses happened under the auspices of the United Nations only adds irony to injury. And does anyone really think the application of the Geneva Convention would make a difference? "Hang on mate — we better not hold this child over this fire, we're subject to the rules of the Geneva Convention now, you know!"

Men who behave this way are flouting a great deal more than a statute. We need to look at who our armies are and what we make our soldiers into.
Stevie Zimmerman,
Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

WITH reference to your June 29 edition: I was appalled at the startling contrast in your coverage of two burning issues. On page 3 you depict two Belgian soldiers, caught literally *in flagrante*, as they roast a Somali child over a fire. Very considerately the faces of these two nameless men are blanked. Then on page 24 you show a manacled 12-year-old boy, identified as Malcolm Shabazz, featuring full face close-up, who is "accused of starting a fire that left his grandmother critically ill".

Why the privilege of anonymity for these two presumably mature and responsible adults, while this emotionally disturbed child of a highly traumatised family is afforded no such consideration? What about the customary anonymity for youthful offenders? No danger of a libel suit from the latter?
Calvin H Poulin,
Nairobi, Kenya

The picture used of the soldiers with the child was from a Belgian newspaper, which published it with the faces already blanked out — Editor

Hypocrisy over Hong Kong

THE coverage on TV of the return of Hong Kong to China proved yet again the skill of the establishment in news management (A last hurrah and an empire closes down, July 6).

We saw the colony symbolically transferred on behalf of one unelected head of state — the Queen — to the unelected Chinese head of state, watched one appointed British governor give way to his appointed Chinese successor, while viewers were told that this could mark the end of "democracy".

The terrible events in Tiananmen Square in 1989 were quite properly recalled, but we were not reminded that in 1967 Britain sent in troops to arrest more than 4,000 people in Hong Kong demonstrating against British rule. Power was also taken to ban meetings, to detain people without trial for up to a year, and several newspapers were closed down. Imperialism has a way of obscuring inconvenient historical facts.
Tony Benn MP,
House of Commons, London

I HOLD no brief for the present Chinese government. My father, a Shanghai businessman, chose not to flee to Hong Kong in 1949: he died in 1961, proud to be Chinese despite serving 10 years in a labour camp in the 1950s on trumped-up charges.

But the laboured cries of "democracy" from vulgar, rich Chinese in Hong Kong, many with escape routes to the West, mean little to millions of Chinese who are rejoicing at the end of a century and a half of humiliation. Patten's last-gasp moves to bring in elections — long after the "one country, two systems" deal — is regarded by many in China as uniquely cynical.
Esther Samson,
London

AMID all the excitement surrounding the handover of Hong Kong, there is a danger that the future of more than 1,000 Vietnamese refugees there will be overlooked. They have been recognised as refugees under the UN Convention. This should entitle them to resettlement in other countries. In practice, resettlement has slowed to a trickle. Some have been refused simply because they have no family or friends in other countries to sponsor them. Many are divorced women with children. They fear that, at best, they will be left in limbo, and subjected to ever-increasing humiliation. The only way to resolve this situation is for resettlement countries to offer further places. Many look to Britain to take the lead.
Jack Shieh,
Hong Kong Vietnamese Working Group, London

High cost of trade in ivory

WE ALL heard the loud cheers when the Cites decision to relax protection of the African elephant was made (Africa's ivory trade wins end of ban, June 29). However, I'm sure that many heard the news with horror.

Poachers in Africa have already resumed their killing in anticipation of the lifting of the ban and now they will presume that it's open season on elephants.

There are a number of schemes that involve local people in the protection of game. And African countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, which do not have much in the way of natural resources to export, can earn valuable foreign exchange by developing their tourist industries and selling film rights.

If we believe that the animals should be saved for posterity — that they have the right to co-exist with humans — then we must attack the greedy who make capital out of trading in bits of dead animals merely for trinkets. The desire to turn all living things on this planet into profit is obscene. The people who do this must be made to feel ashamed.
Carole Stanley,
Stranraer, Scotland

Briefly

DAVID HOFFMAN (June 1[...]) notes that the Russian econ[omy] "has taken on an oligarchic struct[ure] in which large business conglomer[ates], often allied with groups of p[ow]erful politicians, compete for g[...] fortunes — and sometimes resor[t to] violence". Excuse me, but isn't [this] the same as the capitalism that [has] prevailed in the West for the [last] couple of centuries? Excessive [influ]ence by large corporations, coll[usion] with unscrupulous politicians, [re]source wars, violence against [...] workers — it all sounds very fa[miliar]. Perhaps the only valid conclusi[on is] that in Russia the transition to ca[pi]talism has now been achieved a[nd] works just as it was intended to.
(Prof) David Alexander,
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA

MAUREEN PERSSON may ha[ve] lived in Sweden for 50 years but her claim (June 29) that "during the seventies and eighties benefits and subsidies were liberally hand[ed] out — and financed by borrow[ed] money" contradicts the facts, if she [is] referring to the social insurance sy[s]tem, which has always paid for itse[lf].

For example, figures from [the] Central Bureau of Statistics sh[ow] that from 1983 to 1991 the net contributions received and disbur[se]ments for public insurance related [to] health, occupational injuries, p[en]sions and unemployment compe[nsa]tion generated an annual surplu[s] between 17.9 billion and 41.9 bil[lion] kroner ($2.3-$5.4 billion).

In Europe, capitalists and their [So]cial Democratic hatchet men [at]tempt to justify their behaviour [by] false propaganda on the public [sec]tor, and judging by Ms Persson's [let]ter they have succeeded all too w[ell].
Paul Nathanson,
Lund, Sweden

WHAT Jonathan Romney [...] gets in his praise of Be[avis] And Butt-head Do America (Jun[e ...]) is that the 12- and 14-year old [...] watching this foul-mouthed, wom[an]-hating video will not understand [or] get any of the subtleties or sat[ire]. They will instead be encouraged [to] snigger and leer and swear more. [As] to his comment on Bertrand Blier's misogyny being a "given" — I see [no] reason to "accept that" in Blier's [or] anyone else's films.
Kim Stubblefield,
Black Creek, BC, Canada

I WONDER if Lucy Trench fro[m] Prague (June 15) realises h[ow] ridiculous was the pompous "Each language learned opens a window on to the world" at the end of her letter after her frank admission at the beginning: "Czech being a notoriously difficult language, we have sent our children to the French school in Prague."
(Dr) Adam Sumera,
Lodz, Poland

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Troops kill Bosnia war crimes suspect

Karen Coleman in Sarajevo, Ian Black and David Fairhall

BRITISH troops in Bosnia shot dead one Serb war crimes suspect last week and captured another to face trial at the Hague tribunal.

In a daring operation by élite SAS forces that underlined Western determination not to let Bosnia drift back to war, the Serb police chief, Simo Drljaca, was killed after opening fire as troops tried to arrest him. A British soldier was slightly wounded.

The Prijedor hospital director, Milan Kovacevic, who was arrested in a parallel raid, was taken to The Hague, and turned over to the United Nations tribunal — the slow progress of which is stalling implementation of the Dayton peace agreement.

Drljaca, who led ethnic cleansing operations against Muslims and Croats in northern Bosnia in 1992, had been under close surveillance. He was intercepted on a road near the notorious Omarska detention camp.

George Robertson, the British Defence Secretary, told Parliament: "Two other people who were with Drljaca were detained. They have been transferred to The Hague."

Bosnian Serb television, a mouthpiece for the Pale regime, fuelled resentment by alleging that Drljaca was "brutally murdered" by "an S-for terrorist group". An unidentified witness claimed Drljaca had been shot twice, the second time when he was lying wounded on the ground.

The operation seemed to herald a tougher approach to arresting war crimes suspects, but British and Nato officials insisted the mandate of the Stabilisation Force, (S-for), had not changed — apparently to avoid political problems within the alliance as well as to minimise the risk of Serb reprisals.

Troops are not mandated to pursue suspects actively, though the raids, codenamed Operation Tango, showed every sign of careful planning. "These Bosnian Serbs got careless," said one source. "They were spotted and tracked. Well-trained troops then went to apprehend them."

The men most wanted in The Hague — Bosnian Serb political and military leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic — remain free.

Plans for US forces to take a leading role in the snatch squads were stalled by the US defence secretary, William Cohen, who opposes deeper US commitment to Bosnia.

British sources denied that Drljaca and Kovacevic were small fry. One official said: "In the league table of appalling acts Prijedor is in the big league. If Karadzic is prudent he will now conclude that his own future must be more uncertain than it was."

Mr Robertson told the House of Commons the action had been approved at the "highest level" of Nato command. Tony Blair and Bill Clinton discussed it at last week's Nato summit.

Russia protested angrily at the raids against war crimes suspects, hinting it might withdraw from international peacekeeping forces.

"Russia does not bear, and does not intend to bear, any responsibility for the consequences of such unilateral actions," a foreign ministry statement said. "Such cowboy raids threaten the whole Dayton peace process, which is in any case going through a difficult period."

But Nato sources insisted that Russia had no cause for complaint, as the operations were anchored in a United Nations resolution setting up the Hague war crimes tribunal, which Russia had supported.

Diplomats believed the Russian statement was intended to appease President Boris Yeltsin's nationalist and communist critics, who have accused him of doing too little to defend Russia's fellow Orthodox Slavs — the Serbs — in Bosnia.

Britain and other governments hope to send a signal to Mr Karadzic and Gen Mladic, who have been indicted twice but are harder targets — heavily guarded and almost certainly indifferent to the possibility of civilian casualties.

Drljaca was buried in Sveti Pantelija cemetery in Borik, near Banja Luka last weekend. He was given a full state funeral attended by thousands of mourners. There was a heavy police presence at the graveside ceremony, conducted by several Serb Orthodox priests.

Despite the massive turn-out, the atmosphere was calm. Streams of people carrying wreaths walked silently by the grave. Many kissed the cross on the coffin, draped in the blue, white and red Serbian flag.

Martin Woollacott, page 12



Bosnian Serb policeman carry the coffin of their former commander Simo Drljaca PHOTOGRAPH: SRDJAN ILIC

Serbs furious as killer jailed for 20 years

Stephen Bates in Brussels

BOSNIAN Serb leaders reacted furiously as the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague sentenced Dusan Tadic to 20 years in jail on Monday for his part in the ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims and Croats during the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

The first person convicted of war crimes since the second world war, Tadic, aged 41, was found guilty in May of six counts of crimes against humanity, including killings and beatings and five violations of the customs of war. He was also found guilty of taking part in the killing of two Muslim policemen in 1992 at his home town of Prijedor in northwest Bosnia.

Tadic, arrested nearly three years ago in Germany, was implicated in the savage ill-treatment of prisoners at the Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje camps. He had undergone a seven-month trial at The Hague.

The tribunal ruled that Tadic bore "full responsibility for the deaths and the extremely violent and cruel way in which they were caused".

He was acquitted on nine other charges, including murder, and 11 charges were found inapplicable. Lawyers have appealed against his conviction and said they would also appeal against the sentence, which he is likely to serve in Finland or Italy if the verdict is upheld.

Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, the American president of the three-judge tribunal, told Tadic: "You committed these crimes with intention and with sadistic brutality. To condone your actions is to give effect to a base view of morality and to invite anarchy."

The sentence was contested immediately by Goran Neskovic, the Serbs' deputy justice minister. "That man is not guilty and not a single witness could confirm that he was responsible," he said. "All this is one propaganda war against us."

Child immigrants lose right to stay in Hong Kong

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

A DIM SUM waiter in Hong Kong invested nearly all his money in the hope of a new start.

Liu Kam-fong paid "snakeheads" — boatmen, hoods and corrupt officials — HK$12,000 ($1,600) to smuggle his Chinese wife and two sons across the border in time for the handover on July 1.

It seemed a sound investment. Hong Kong was about to enter a new era governed not by Britain but the Basic Law, a Beijing-drafted constitution fixing rights and rules for the future, among them the right of all children born across the border to move to Hong Kong if they have a parent from the territory.

But the unelected legislature has rewritten the rules and, two weeks after the Basic Law was supposed to go into effect, Mr Liu's two boys and hundreds of other children now face deportation. This retroactive revision, condemned by parents, lawyers and human rights groups, seems popular in a city that, although mostly made up of immigrants, resents new arrivals.

The Bar Association warned of chaos if rights enshrined in the Basic Law can be changed by a legislature that is itself under challenge in the courts.

Under the new rules all mainland children claiming right of abode in Hong Kong must obtain a "Certificate of Entitlement" from the authorities across the border. Some 66,000 mainland children have a right to live in Hong Kong, many of whom are thought to have crossed the border illegally.

The new governor, Tung Chee-hwa, fortified by public hostility to newcomers and editorials in the China-funded press, is standing firm. Allowing illegal immigrants to stay, he says, would open the floodgates. The Basic Law would be implemented — slowly.

"How can we look after them and everybody else too?"

Nato opens doors to east

TRUMPETING a new era for European security and ignoring rumbling opposition from Russia, Nato last week invited Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to join the alliance, and left the door open for more ex-communist countries to follow, *writes Ian Black in Madrid.*

Reflecting bitter internal divisions at the Madrid summit over the scope and pace of enlargement, Javier Solana, secretary general of the 16-member alliance, named Slovenia and Romania as prime candidates for future membership but set no date. And he risked Moscow's fury by calling the three Baltic republics "aspiring members".

President Bill Clinton, who put the full weight of the United States behind a strict three-nation limit to enlargement, described Nato's decision as a "giant stride".

The three will become full members by 1999, Nato's 50th anniversary. Nato also signed a special charter with Ukraine, too close to Russia ever to be allowed to join.

Le Monde, page 13

The Week

THOUSANDS of Kenyan students fought riot police in the heart of Nairobi, defying President Daniel arap Moi a week after the worst political unrest in Kenya in seven years.

Washington Post, page 15

A MISSION to repair damage on the Mir space station has been postponed indefinitely. A five-hour space walk, designed as a dress rehearsal, has also been put on hold. The repairs were intended to restore electrical power lost after a crash.

A FIRE that raged through a 16-storey hotel in the Thai resort of Pattaya, 200km south of Bangkok, killed 90 people.

A POWERFUL earthquake in Venezuela's central and eastern coastal region killed at least 59 people and injured 322.

ISRAELI troops fired rubber bullets at journalists covering clashes in the West Bank town of Hebron, wounding five photographers. Nine Palestinian demonstrators were also injured.

JEAN-MARIE Le Pen, leader of France's far-right National Front, will stand trial in November for an alleged assault on a female Socialist parliamentary candidate.

MEXICAN authorities have formally charged Raul Salinas, the brother of former president Carlos Salinas, with laundering $14 million.

ELEVEN people were killed in riots that followed the desecration of a statue of the Dalit leader Ambedkar in Bombay.

MALCOLM Shabazz, aged 12, pleaded guilty to starting the fire that killed his grandmother Betty Shabazz, widow of Malcolm X, in New York last month.

STEVEN Thomas, aged 35, from New York, was sentenced to 14 years in prison in Helsinki for knowingly infecting five Finnish women with the virus that causes Aids. He was found guilty on 17 counts of attempted manslaughter.

A COURT in Rome sentenced eight separatists, who earlier this year staged an armed raid on St Mark's Square in Venice, to prison terms of up to six years.

CHANCELLOR Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats were within their rights to exclude three members of the Church of Scientology, a Bonn court ruled.

OJ SIMPSON, who was found responsible for the death of his ex-wife Nicole, was forced to sell his Los Angeles mansion after falling behind with his payments. It went for $2.6 million.



In at the deep end . . . The centre of Wroclaw is inundated as floodwaters continue to rise. Floods have ravaged much of Poland, claiming at least 28 lives
PHOTOGRAPH: PAWEL KOPCZYNSKI

Voters wary of Polish free-for-all

Ian Traynor in Warsaw

IN THE crazy paving of Polish party politics, there is a slab called the Polish Patrimony Peasant Christian Forum. Another is called the Pensioners' Party. And there's also the Union for Real Politics, although its electoral prospects are nil.

There are dozens of other hopefuls. Each month brings a new outfit, a new squabble, a new splinter group. The crazy paving keeps shifting. Take any permutation of the words Polish, Democratic, Christian and National, and you have a party of sorts. There could be up to 50 coalition permutations possible after the general election on September 21. The one certainty is that this will change.

But some things remain the same. The fixtures of Polish politics are the former communists, heirs to the party that ruled unchallenged until 1989 and now back in power; the heirs to the Solidarity movement, which brought down the communists; and the Roman Catholic Church.

Under President Aleksander Kwasniewski and the prime minister, Wlodimierz Cimoszlewicz, the former communists are generally seen as competent opportunists doing a decent job. They became communists when bright careers beckoned; they ditched communism when it became a liability. They now face a stiff challenge in September.

Under a new strongman, Marian Krzaklewski, Solidarity is back, transformed from a trade union into a political machine. After winning the war in 1989, the movement collapsed in fatigue and fragmentation. Now it has been reborn as a populist rightwing alliance, fiercely anticommunist, allied with the Church and spoiling for a fight.

Last week Mr Krzaklewski announced that he was turning the loose Solidarity Election Alliance set up earlier this year into a proper political party. Strongly pro-welfare and labour in social and economic policy, the new Solidarity is deeply conservative and traditionalist in its moral and cultural views, running on the slogan "Poland, Freedom, Family".

In short, it looks as if Poland is about to acquire a proper Christian Democratic party, although perhaps of the Italian rather than German model — prone to endless splits and bickering. The party consists of at least 20 different groups, all currently fighting over the September electoral lists.

The opinion polls put Solidarity neck-and-neck with the former communists — the Left Democratic Alliance — on about 25 per cent. But analysts wonder whether Solidarity would hold together if it ended up dominating the next government.

It has a reactionary and nationalist fringe worried about European integration and the "sell-out" of the country to foreigners (read Germans). It is fundamentally anti-abortion and convinced that the only good Pole is a Catholic.

Zygmund Wrzodak, the Solidarity leader at the Ursus tractor works in Warsaw — a cradle of the movement — recently caused a furore by declaring that Poland was being run by communist Jews.

Radio Maryja, the Catholic radio station with 5 million listeners, is a strong supporter, railing against "Jewish-Freemason plots" to take over Poland. "We want a Polish Catholic president, not a communist Jew."

Influential elements of the Church hierarchy are critical of the radio. The Church itself is divided between liberal and conservative wings and still struggling to find an appropriate role in a democracy.

But the polarisation between Solidarity and former communists, which remains the central conflict, means that "we're getting an election about God, abortion and Jews, instead of about taxes", says the columnist Konstanty Gebert.

The political class is fascinated by the rowing — not so the public. Only 42 per cent voted in the May referendum on a new constitution, and pollsters fear a low turnout again.

If Poland gets a new government in September, it will be the eighth in the eight years since communism's collapse. The country is thriving despite, rather than because of, its politics. The eight years it took to get a new democratic constitution is another measure of the endemic political paralysis. It was opposed by Solidarity and the Church.

What really sticks in the throats of the anti-communists is that the country has made the breakthrough to Nato membership and acquired its first democratic constitution under the former communists.

Asia 'faces acute rice shortage'

Claire Wallerstein in Manila

FOOD shortages will ravage Asia unless rice, its staple diet, can be genetically engineered to improve yields and so sustain the region's spiralling population.

The grim forecast by the International Rice Research Institute has added urgency because its scientists claim their project to develop a "super-rice" is under threat from funding cuts.

The institute, a non-profit-making body set up by the Rockefeller and Henry Ford foundations, developed IR8, the "miracle" rice that averted a famine in Asia in the 1960s.

But scientists based at the institute's headquarters in the Philippines say the crisis this time is greater. They warn that if their project is delayed food shortages could topple the region's newly emerging tiger economies.

It is estimated that by 2025 the world population explosion will require rice production to rise by 70 per cent, forcing farmers to grow crops with less space, water and chemicals. Possible climate change may add to their problems.

At the moment, the rice bowl is usually full. But the recent famine in North Korea, and soaring world rice prices when cold weather ruined Japanese harvests in 1993, have given a glimpse of what could lie in store if production methods do not improve.

Scientists hope to use genetic material from some of the world's 80,000 breeds of rice to engineer a much more productive and pest- and disease-resistant strain. Coupled with irrigation and agricultural advances being developed at the institute's experimental farm, output could leap from an average of about 2 tons per acre to the 6 tons needed.

The institute also hopes to make rice-farming more attractive to Asia's young, most of whom are leaving the land to seek their fortunes in cities — leaving agriculture to women and the elderly. "People need food to survive. They cannot eat microchips," said the institute's director-general, Klaus Lampe.

But the $23 million funding the institute received in 1995 was cut by $6 million last year, and almost half its 1,000 staff were laid off.

Fernando Bernardo, deputy director for international services, said: "We cannot afford to ignore the fact that the world's population is increasing by 90 million people a year — half of whom are rice eaters. The only way we will feed a growing population with rapidly decreasing resources is through research. This is a race against time."

Ireland's former PM 'forgot' $2m gift

David Sharrock

IRELAND'S political sleaze saga took a bizarre twist last week when the former Irish prime minister, Charles Haughey, said he had "mistakenly instructed his legal team" and finally admitted receiving $2 million from the former chief of the country's largest stores chain.

The former taoiseach made the disclosure in a statement read by his lawyer to a tribunal of inquiry into payments made to politicians by Ben Dunne, formerly boss of Ireland's Dunnes Stores group. Mr Dunne's solicitor, Noel Smyth, also told the inquiry his client had made an offer — which was rejected — to pay another $1.6 million towards Mr Haughey's tax bill on condition the former prime minister agreed to disclose the earlier payments.

In his third contradictory version of events given in recent days, Mr Haughey said he had "mistakenly instructed his legal team" until last week, but that they had now agreed to continue representing him at the tribunal.

Mr Haughey said his new statement arose from "helpful documents" he had been handed by Mr Dunne's solicitor. In his first response to the tribunal Mr Haughey, who was expected to give evidence this week, denied receiving any money, then agreed that he did but could not recall the identity of the donor.

The Haughey statement said: "I now accept that I received £1.3 million from Mr Ben Dunne's solicitor, and that I became aware that he was the donor to the late Mr Des Traynor [Mr Haughey's former accountant] in 1993."

Mr Dunne, who was forced out of the company business five years ago following charges of cocaine possession in the United States, gave evidence earlier this year. He said he gave Mr Haughey the money because he looked depressed, saying "this is something for yourself", and received the reply, "Thank you, big fellow."

The present management of Dunnes Stores is to seek the return of the money.

Hutus held prisoner in their own land

Chris McGreal in Nyarurama, Burundi

AMELIE MUVUNI is not a prisoner in the conventional sense. There is no fence to keep her confined to the squalid, overcrowded hillside camp she was herded into by Burundi's army.

But were she not to be found in her makeshift shelter at dusk, Amelie could not count on her age and infirmity to save her from a bullet.

"They made us come here," she said. "They tell us it is for our own good, but they do not treat us well. They beat us and they kill people. We are always afraid."

Burundi's Tutsi-led military government has forced hundreds of thousands of Hutus into camps dotted across the country. The authorities call it "regroupment" aimed at separating the majority Hutu peasant population from rebels battling the overwhelmingly Tutsi army and targeting civilians.

Critics — including the Hutu party driven from power by President Pierre Buyoya's military coup a year ago — call them concentration camps. The United States has demanded their closure.

In military terms, regroupment has borne fruit. In many areas the rebels are no longer able to shelter among the population or rely on it for support. Attacks in Kayanza province, where Ms Muvuni is one of about 100,000 people in camps, have dropped sharply.

But the grandmother, aged 58, and her fellow internees are paying the price. Severely overcrowded, heavily guarded camps in four provinces, including Kayanza, have been hit by typhus and dysentery. Starvation has pushed up the death toll.

Hutus in the camps accuse the army of torture, murder and rape. Others report the systematic disappearance of hundreds of young Hutu men. And with whole communities driven out, the military embarked on a scorched earth policy, destroying homes and crops, and killing those who remained outside the camps.

The government says about 300,000 people are interned. Outside agencies believe the real figure is twice as high.

The military governor of Kayanza province, Colonel Daniel Nengeri, concedes that most of those in the camps went reluctantly. But he says they were also the target of attack from what the government calls "armed bands".

Col Nengeri said: "The population didn't ask to be regrouped. The population has been regrouped for its own security. At first they didn't like it but they came to see it was for their own good. We want to separate innocent people from the armed bands so we could deal with them militarily."

Ms Muvuni does not see internment as for her own good. "The army came to our commune and told us we had to go to the camp the next day," she said. "The soldiers said that anybody who was left in their homes was a rebel and they would kill them."

In the eastern province of Karuzi, the army behaved in a particularly brutal fashion. It swept across hillsides after the deadline for people to clear out had passed, murdering those remaining. Soldiers destroyed houses and looted.

A couple working the field in front of their scorched home talked nervously. "The soldiers ruined everything," the man said. "They made us stay in the camp for weeks while they destroyed. They took all the young men from the roadside and the camp. We don't know what happened to them. The soldiers violate the women because there's nothing we can do."

The first camps sprang up towards the end of 1996 and, by the beginning of this year they were dotted across the countryside.

In the weeks after Ms Muvuni and her family were herded into Nyarurama, they were not allowed to leave the camp, even to harvest crops. The military government was counting on foreign aid agencies to provide food and health care, but most were reluctant to collaborate with the incarceration.

Left to its own devices, and facing an international embargo, the government chose to spend its scarce resources on weapons. Malnutrition soared. With hunger came disease.

"There were some deaths," said Col Nengeri. "I don't know how many, but not catastrophic."

Foreign health workers and camp internees say the number of people who died from disease and malnutrition runs into the thousands.

In some areas the government is now moving to dismantle the camps. One large camp has been cleared in Kayanza, and Col Nengeri says he hopes to empty them all by the end of the year.

Lake Kivu
50 km
Kigali
RWANDA
Kayanza
CONGO
Nyarurama
Bujumbura
BURUNDI
TANZANIA
Lake Tanganyika

Ms Muvuni is not optimistic. "If they let me go, I have to build a new house. Who says the army won't come and destroy it again?"

● The killings of Rwandan refugees in Congo (formerly Zaire) were so widespread and systematic that they can be considered crimes against humanity and possibly genocide, a United Nations report said last week.

That means those held responsible for the killings could be tried before international tribunals, such as those set up for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, it said.

Sierra Leone suspended

Ian Black

SIERRA LEONE is to join Nigeria in being suspended from Commonwealth activities until it moves back towards democracy, British and Commonwealth foreign ministers announced last week.

Tony Lloyd, the British Foreign Office Minister of State, joined fellow members of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) in suspending the west African country after the coup against President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in May.

The group did not say what action it would recommend against Nigeria at October's Edinburgh summit, after hearing two days of representations from Nigerian opposition, human rights and Commonwealth groups.

Expectations are mounting that the Commonwealth will take a tougher position because of a more forceful stand by Britain, which wants Nigeria's continued suspension from the organisation. It was suspended at the Auckland summit in 1995 after its military-led regime executed the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other minority rights activists.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, who has promised to put ethics at the heart of British foreign policy, said recently the regime of General Sani Abacha would remain a pariah unless it respected human rights and restored democracy.

Some opposition groups want Nigeria expelled from the Commonwealth, but this could split the organisation. Britain believes tougher sanctions could be agreed, though economic interests mean the only really effective weapon, an oil embargo, is highly unlikely.

Cuba marks Che's return

A BRIEF, quietly emotional ceremony marked the return to Cuba of the remains of legendary revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara last weekend, 30 years after he was captured and shot while leading a guerrilla uprising in Bolivia.

The remains, unearthed last week from a secret mass grave near Vallegrande, Bolivia, were flown to Cuba and received by President Fidel Castro, members of Guevara's family, and old comrades-in-arms.

Guevara's daughter Aleida Guevara March, her voice breaking slightly with emotion, read an address to President Castro on behalf of the children of Guevara and of three Cuban guerrilla comrades whose remains were exhumed from the same mass grave in Bolivia and also returned to Cuba.

"Today their remains return to us, but they do not return vanquished, they come as heroes, always young, valiant, strong and brave," she said.

Guevara's closest surviving family are his Cuban widow Aleida March and his four children. At their request the ceremony was brief and sombre.

Guevara, an Argentine doctor, was President Castro's right-hand man in the guerrilla struggle that led to the overthrow of dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959.

He left Cuba in the mid-1960s to continue fighting for his revolutionary ideals, first in Africa and then in Bolivia, where he was killed by Bolivian troops in October 1967. He became an icon for leftists around the world and is still revered in Cuba.

His remains were taken to the armed forces [defence] ministry in Havana's Revolution Square. In October, they will be moved to a mausoleum being specially built in the square that bears his name in the central town of Santa Clara. —*Reuter*

Greenspan's brave new capitalist world

The US this week

Martin Walker

THERE are few certainties in the dismal science. But one interesting feature of economic life has been that a serious recession or a stock market slump has invariably been preceded by a rash of predictions that the economic cycle has been flattened and that the key to an endless boom has at last been found.

There was the historic prediction by Irving Fisher of "permanent plateau of prosperity" in 1929, just before the Wall Street roof fell in. He was in good company. President Hoover ran in 1928 on the promise of "the new slogan of prosperity, from the full dinner pail to the full garage".

There was the glorious International Monetary Fund pronouncement of 1959 that "in all likelihood, inflation is over", and the famous conference of economists in 1969, under the benign gaze of Federal Reserve chairman Arthur Burns, with the comforting title "Is the business cycle obsolete?".

Then there was George Bush's courtship of that wonderful girl "Rosie Scenario" in the 1988 campaign, as the fans of Reaganomics claimed that the new wonders of "just-in-time" production and computerised inventory controls had eliminated the problem of the business cycle. In the summer of 1990, with the recession already under way, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan assured Congress that "the likelihood of a recession seems low".

Dreams, all dreams. And here we go again, with President Clinton bragging of "the new economic paradigm" at the Group of Seven summit in Denver and telling Business Week that after tutorials from his central banker — Greenspan — "I believe it's possible to have more sustained and higher growth without inflation than we previously thought . . . The globalisation of our economy, the impact of technologies, improved management, increased productivity, and a greater sophistication among working people about the relationship between their incomes and the growth of their companies — all are giving us a greater capacity for growth".

The ebullience of mature capitalism is not only flying as high as the stock market, it is catching. "Are Recessions Necessary?" asked the cover of US News and World Report. "Capitalism Without Limits" proclaims the cover of Rupert Murdoch's Weekly Standard. Wired magazine hails "The Long Boom". Last year's presidential candidate Steve Forbes declares in his eponymous magazine that "this new era will be liberating and inspiring. It will enrich us not only materially but spiritually and culturally".

Well, perhaps happy days are finally here to stay, just in time for the millennium. Perhaps governments and central banks have learned how to deregulate, cut taxes, curb spending and control their debts, just as the baby-boom generation is in its peak earning years and starting to save for retirement. Perhaps, despite all the false dawns and disappointments of the past, the economics profession has at last got it right.

Maybe Greenspan has finally found the philosopher's stone. If so, he began his search for it in an odd place. It is not generally known that America's current dominance of the global economy was born in the Harry Jerome Swing Band of 1947. The United States' central banker, who is widely assumed by corporate America to sit at the right hand of God, played bass clarinet.

And alongside him in the rhythm section was Leonard Garment, who went on to a slightly blemished legal career as White House counsel to President Richard Nixon. In 1974, in the heat of Nixon's losing battle to save his presidency, Garment persuaded Tricky Dicky to nominate his old band mate as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

It was not an obvious choice. Greenspan, who made his name after 1954 as a private financial consultant on Wall Street, had only been awarded his PhD in economics two years earlier. Before that, he had sat at the feet of Ayn Rand, the ultra-rightwing laureate of the utterly free market. Every couple of years, he still re-reads her novel Atlas Shrugged, about gold-loving entrepreneurs going on strike until Americans saw the error of their socialistic ways.

Confirmed in his chairmanship by the US Senate after Nixon's resignation, Greenspan stayed on with President Gerald Ford's administration, where he presided over a jump in inflation to within a whisker of 10 per cent and one of the nastier recessions of the post-war era.

In 1987, he was appointed chairman of the Federal Reserve board by Reagan, and his swift decision to raise interest rates precipitated the stock market crash in October of that year. Having made the mess, he helped the economy clamber out of it by a promise to make available whatever liquidity the market needed. The inevitable result was that the economy overheated.

No problem, Greenspan assured the newly installed President Bush. He would engineer a "soft landing", an exquisitely crafted squeeze on interest rates that would slow the economy without going too far. Bush lost the 1992 election because he believed his central banker. The recession of 1991 may have been mild as these things go, but it dismayed enough voters to trigger the Ross Perot phenomenon and secure the election of Bill Clinton.

Third time lucky. After two disasters, Greenspan has finally got the economy right. Let me rephrase that. Greenspan has delivered an extraordinary bonanza for shareholders, and what appears to be a stable-state boom based on strong GDP and productivity growth, low inflation, and unemployment now stable at a happily low 5 per cent.



Alan Greenspan . . . devoted follower of Ayn Rand's ultra-right views

But in the process, he has delivered the most socially divisive economy the US has seen since the 1930s. The Institute for International Economics, an establishment think-tank run by a former assistant secretary of the Treasury, last month defined those steepening divisions in an arresting way.

IN THE past 20 years, the ratio of wages for the best paid 10 per cent of workers to those of the bottom 10 per cent rose from 360 per cent to 525 per cent. The figures are for wages before tax, and tax for the wealthy has been slashed over the same period. So Jack Welch, chief executive of General Electric Co, now takes home 300 times the earnings of his shopfloor workers. Thirty years ago, Welch's predecessor took home 30 times more than his employees.

This may be a good thing for the US economy, narrowly defined. But it may be a damaging process to inflict on American society as a whole. Laura D'Andrea Tyson, who can claim some of the credit for the current boom from her time chairing the Council of Economic Advisers in Clinton's first term, warns of "the economic disaster that has befallen low-skilled workers, especially young men".

There are other casualties of the Greenspan boom, beyond the warning signs of unprecedented numbers of bankruptcies and soaring consumer debt. The growth in employment includes temporary and part-time jobs, many of them deliberately crafted to spare employers the extra costs of health care and pension schemes.

Alan Binder, the liberal academic economist who served alongside Greenspan at the Fed, suggests rather glumly that the US and much of the rest of the developed world have seen a historic and strategic victory for wealth in our own societies, a domestic echo of the defeat of the Soviet Union in the cold war.

"I think when historians look back at the last quarter of the 20th century, the shift from labour to capital, the almost unprecedented shift of money and power up the income pyramid is going to be their number one focus", says the thoughtful and historically minded Alan Binder.

Greenspan concentrates instead on the changes in the economic system itself, with global competition and the productivity benefits of computerisation finally bearing fruit. But if globalisation is such an important component of the new American economy, then there is obvious room for alarm at the difficulties so many other parts of the global economy are currently suffering. The Asian miracles are slowing. Japan's financial sector is in desperate straits. The Thai Tiger is currently whimpering in its lair as the baht collapses. Hong Kong's fate is at best uncertain.

Whatever may or may not be happening in economies around the world, they are all based on people and usually therefore on voters. And the results of the recent Mexican, French and earlier British elections suggest that many ordinary people are not happy with Greenspan's brave new capitalist world. Governments that agree with him are being evicted. Governments that broadly agree with him — like the Clinton administration — but with important reservations about the social implications of his nostrums are doing rather better.

Clinton may have taken Greenspan's advice to tackle the federal budget deficit back in 1993, but he also passed the Earned Income Tax Credit. This has proved the most socially useful bit of government intervention the US economy has seen in years. The EITC meant that the working poor were taken out of the tax net, and that every working family would end up with an income above the poverty line. Clinton also raised the minimum wage. Between them, these measures have softened the impact of Greenspanism for more than 30 million Americans, without affecting the Greenspan boom.

HOW LONG can this boom continue? Some of the smart money on Wall Street is worrying. Barton Briggs, the chief international economist at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, has been advising his investors to start selling stocks and holding cash, on the theory that a 20-30 per cent crash could "materialise with the stunning violence of a punch in the mouth when you aren't expecting it".

The Dow Jones index has risen by 37 per cent in the past year, although corporate earnings rose by just 10 per cent. The forward price-earnings ratio of stocks is normally highest in the depths of a slump and falls as the economy recovers and stock prices rise. But here we are in full boom conditions, and the forward P/E ratio is above 18, just where it was in the recessionary first quarter of 1991. In the boom year of 1994, the forward P/E ratio fell below 12, which is what economists expect. Its rise now means that something is getting out of whack here. It means, in short, that Greenspan's warning last year that the stock market was showing dangerous signs of "irrational exuberance" deserves to be dusted off again.

Greenspan is said to study an extraordinary range of economic indicators. The Fed staff used to track 5,000 data series. Under his reign, they now track more than 14,000. He gets special briefings from key sectors. The National Association of Home Builders give him an early peek at their housing starts. Detroit gives him advance auto sales figures. The signs there are not good. The last quarter's sales figures were 4 per cent down over the year at Ford, 5 per cent at General Motors, and 11 per cent at Chrysler.

I hope Greenspan also ponders China. For the past 15 years, the real prices of food and oil when adjusted for inflation have been dropping, a happy state of affairs which helped tame inflation in the industrialised world. Last year, China for the first time became a net importer of both food and energy, as a billion people started clambering up the food and consumption chain from subsistence diets to big Macs. The West's current low-inflation boom is likely to prove as temporary as the Big Band era where Greenspan got his start.

Labour's retreat on hunt ban

Guardian Reporters

THE private member's bill to ban fox hunting was in jeopardy last week after the Government indicated it would not force a vote if it proved too controversial.

Amid growing signs that the bill was unlikely to become law, it became clear that the Cabinet is split, despite Tony Blair's insistence that he would vote for a ban. Without the Government making available the necessary parliamentary time, the bill has no chance of being passed.

Last week up to 100,000 pro-hunters converged on London to demonstrate in Hyde Park against the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill being sponsored by the Labour MP for Worcester, Mike Foster, but ministers distanced themselves from the controversy.

At least three members of the Cabinet, Robin Cook, Jack Straw and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, are opposed to a ban on hunting foxes, hares, stags and mink. One senior Labour source suggested it would get little support in government circles.

The anti-hunting lobby and Opposition MPs were quick to react to the moves, which would see the clearest political chance to ban hunting fall by the wayside.

Kevin Saunders, spokesman for the League Against Cruel Sports, said there would be "hell to pay" if Labour backed down from a measure which had majority support in Britain. "The Labour party has given us a promise on this issue. If they think that they are under pressure from the blood sports lobby then that will be as nothing to the pressure we will bring to bear if they renege on that promise."

At last week's rally William Hague, the Conservative leader, chose to turn up in person, rather than leave pledges of Tory support to a barn-storming Michael Heseltine, who said the ban would not save the life of a single fox.

The crocodile tears flowed from the man who had dismantled the mining industry: "This bill would destroy communities, damage fragile environments and destroy jobs."

It was Glastonbury without the mud or love, the crowd a roaring sea of fishing rods, shooting sticks, crutches and Hermès scarves, as pipes and horn celebrated the return of passion of Tory politics: "The proposed bill is a vicious onslaught on a treasured tradition of rural life for no reason beyond the satisfaction of the bigotry and prejudice of people whose concept of rural life owes more to Walt Disney than the real world," said Mr Heseltine.

The former deputy prime minister was joined by farmers, farm workers, miners, the jockey Willie Carson and the Labour peer, hunting barrister Lady Mallalieu.

But ministers are not keen to be impaled on such a divisive issue. Downing Street let it be known that Mr Blair would not have chosen a hunting ban for a private member's bill had he been in Mr Foster's shoes.

The MP is all but certain of a large Commons majority for the free vote, but all controversial private member's bills are vulnerable to delay by detailed debate and obstruction in committee.

Asked if Labour would give the bill government time, a minister said: "We have no plans to do that. We have got a very tight programme already."

Mr Foster's bill is due to get its second reading in the Commons on November 28 and would run into trouble early next year. Even if it got through the Commons, peers have signalled hostility, which is almost certain to be backed by a solid countryside and libertarian majority.

Pro-hunters among up to 100,000 in Hyde Park at the biggest political rally since the poll tax in 1990 PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Straw finds 'prison works' until it bursts at seams

MICHAEL HOWARD may no longer be Home Secretary, but his credo that "prison works" has left his successor, Jack Straw, with the pressing problem of overcrowded prisons. So Labour, once fiercely opposed to privately built and operated prisons, has now ordered two of them, at Salford and Bristol, and may also buy more prison ships.

The prison population of England and Wales rose by nearly 40 per cent during Mr Howard's four-year tenure. It is still rising at the rate of 300 a week and now stands at nearly 62,000, which is within 500 of the system's maximum capacity. Richard Tilt, the director-general of the prison service, has warned Mr Straw that prisoners may soon have to be housed in police cells, where weekly costs run to about £2,000 per inmate.

Home Secretaries have the power to sanction the early release of non-violent offenders, but Mr Straw views this as a last resort. Instead, he is considering the imposition of time limits on bringing cases to trial. This would rapidly relieve overcrowding because about a fifth of those in custody will either be found not guilty or be given non-custodial sentences.

Other remedies are to encourage the greater use of non-custodial sentences, such as community service, and to extend the use of electronic tagging as an alternative to prison.

More prison ships are not a favoured option. HMP Weare, a hulk brought from the United States and moored off Portland as a prison ship, cost £15 million to convert. Even so, 45 prisoners had to be evacuated last month because her fire sprinklers were defective. Disused army camps could provide better emergency jails, and Mr Tilt is considering six possible sites.

THE PRESS, as well as politicians, were blamed by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, for the explosion in the prison population. The tenor of political rhetoric had strongly favoured the imposition of severe sentences, he said. "This rhetoric has been faithfully reflected in certain elements of the media, and judges accused of passing lenient sentences have found themselves routinely castigated in some newspapers."

Judges were anxious to avoid having their sentences referred to the Appeal Court by the Attorney-General as "unduly lenient", said Lord Bingham. The result was the "extraordinary paradox" that judges and magistrates had been criticised for over-lenient sentencing during a period when they had been sending more defendants to prison for longer periods than at any time in the past 40 years.

A MAN suffering from multiple sclerosis, and who was denied an expensive new drug on the grounds of cost, won a landmark victory in the High Court, which ruled that North Derbyshire health authority had operated an unlawful policy in refusing to fund any treatment with beta interferon.

Because a year's supply of beta interferon costs £10,000, Kenneth Fisher was denied treatment with the only drug that has any real effect on the incurable disease. Mr Justice Dyson ruled that the health authority had failed to take account of national guidelines and operated a policy that amounted to a blanket ban in funding treatment of its MS sufferers with the drug.

The ruling means that the health authorities which are refusing to provide treatment with beta interferon will have to assess their patients to identify the one in ... who is thought can benefit from it.

A PIECE of history was made in Luxembourg when a British prime minister's wife not only pleaded in an international court — the European Court of Justice — but also, indirectly, asked for a finding against her husband's government.

Cherie Booth, QC, was acting for Lisa Grant, who was suing her employer, South West Trains, for refusal to grant Jill Percey, her lesbian partner of five years, the same free travel pass that it extends to heterosexual couples, whether married or unmarried.

The case is notionally against the British government, which argues that the European Union has no power to regulate over the sexual orientation of workers. Since the papers were filed, however, Ms Booth's husband has signed the treaty arising from the Amsterdam summit which will outlaw discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The court's decision is expected in September.

THE Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, rounded on "fat cat" lawyers who regularly earn more than £1 million a year, suggesting that their fees prevented ordinary people going to court.

Lord Irvine, admitting that he was one of the top-earning QCs before he joined the government, said: "I am in an especially good position to know the facts and I don't think they should be suppressed."

Though he is the highest paid member of the Cabinet, his salary of £140,665 is thought to be a tiny fraction of his earnings at the Bar.

Lord Irvine was hitting back at calls by the Bar Council to reverse increases in court fees by his predecessor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, arguing that the high fees commanded by barristers deterred people from taking cases to court.

Austin

WE SAID TEN O'CLOCK YOU'RE £250 LATE

Priests serve no earthly employer

Clare Dyer

PRIESTS have no rights under employment law because they serve God and have no employer on earth, three Court of Appeal judges ruled last week.

They dismissed an appeal by an Anglican curate, the Rev Dr Alex Coker, against an Employment Appeal Tribunal ruling barring him from taking his case of unfair dismissal before an industrial tribunal.

Lord Justice Staughton said: "A minister of religion serves God and his congregation but does not serve an employer. There is not a contract that he will serve a terrestrial employer in the performance of his duties."

An official from the MSF union, which started a clergy section two years ago, said the union would press for a change in the law. The Rev Kit Chalcraft, the divorced vicar sacked for marrying for the third time, who had also hoped to take his case to a tribunal, has dropped his claim on legal advice.

Dr Coker, aged 48, was ousted from his home and post at St Philip's Church in Cheam, south-west London, in May 1994 by the Bishop of Croydon without being given any reason.

He took his case to a tribunal, claiming his dismissal was unfair and racially motivated. Both he and the bishop, the Right Rev Wilfred Wood, are black.

The tribunal ruled that he could bring his case, but its decision was overturned by the Employment Appeal Tribunal last year.

The Church of England has always claimed that clergy work for God, not the Church, and are office holders, not employees, so have no protection under employment law.

Dr Coker took his action against the Bishop of Southwark, who licensed him as a curate in 1990, to the Court of Appeal. He argued through his counsel that a letter from the bishop offering him a post and his reply accepting it constituted an offer of employment.

Joseph Hage, who represented him at the Court of Appeal, had asked the judges: "Why should Dr Coker . . . not be entitled to rely on the Employment Protection Act? Is it right that [he] should lose his home, income and career without even being given the possibility of making a complaint in the courts?"

The Bishop of Southwark, the Right Rev Roy Williamson, said: "I am delighted but not surprised at the judgment, confirming what we had always understood the law to state — that a curate is not an employee. This clarification of an important point of law has significance throughout the Church."

Gays win partial right to lower consent age

Ewen MacAskill and Michael White

THE Government this week dropped a case in the European courts over lowering the age of consent for male homosexuals from 18 to 16, but still intends to contest a move to legalise homosexuality in the armed forces.

Gay rights campaigners, who held high hopes that Labour would prove more liberal than the Tories, celebrated the Government's dropping of its opposition to a case in the European Court of Human Rights on the age of consent for homosexuals.

But campaigners had to temper their enthusiasm when it emerged that hopes of an early Commons vote on reducing the age of consent to 16 were receding.

Their enthusiasm was further diluted when the Ministry of Defence said it would press ahead with a case in the European Court of Justice brought by a former naval officer who wants an end to discrimination in the armed forces. The MoD opposes homosexuality in the armed forces, arguing it is bad for morale.

Peter Tatchell, spokesman for the gay rights group OutRage, said: "It is very odd that the Government is now supporting gay equality on the age of consent in the European Court of Human Rights but opposing gay equality in the armed forces in the European Court of Justice."

In the last Commons vote in February 1994, MPs voted to reduce the age of consent from 21 to 18. Although Conservative MPs condemned the prospect of it being reduced to 16, in line with the age of consent for heterosexuals, there is no obvious opportunity for a free vote in the next year or two.

The Government stressed its neutrality: it was only offering a free vote, not recommending reduction to 16. With all three main party leaders — including the Tories' William Hague — backing a lower age, ministers believe the change will come in time, but are in no rush to intervene, wary of the political minefield they would be entering.

The European Court case is regarded as "bowing to the inevitable", but abandonment of the military cases might trigger the kind of row with the top brass which disfigured President Clinton's early months in office in 1992.

● The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, delivered an uncompromising rejection of gay clergy reform at the church's general synod this week, while signalling an international Anglican commission to seek a way forward matching the recent compromise on women priests.

The Church of England committed itself to a wider debate on gay priests, but one with conservative guidelines.

Dr Carey said: "I do not find any justification, from the Bible or the entire Christian tradition, for sexual activity outside marriage. Thus, same-sex relationships in my view cannot be on a par with marriage."

The archbishop, however, supported an "honest, open and tolerant" discussion on the issue.

In Brief

TONY BLAIR told the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, that the Government would give "particular attention" to how Europe can assist in the Middle East peace process when Britain takes over the European Union presidency next year.

Comment, page 12

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, may make it easier to sack police officers believed by their chiefs to be corrupt after claims from the West Midlands chief constable, Ted Crew, that he was unable to sack the small number of corrupt officers in his force because of the disciplinary process.

Comment, page 12

HAMPSHIRE police have confirmed that they are investigating fresh allegations of voting irregularity in the constituency of Winchester, which was won by two votes on May 1 by Liberal Democrat Mark Oaten over Tory Gerry Malone.

THE UXBRIDGE byelection — triggered by the death of Tory MP, Sir Michael Shersby, a week after the general election — will be held on July 31.

LESLEY CROUCHMAN, who did not know she was pregnant when she had a sterilisation operation and later gave birth to a boy, was awarded more than £100,000 damages in the High Court to cover the cost of bringing up her son.

RICHARD EYRE, the man who transformed the fortunes of Capital Radio, has been poached to become chief executive of the ITV network.

PROFESSOR Roy Anderson, whose analysis of the BSE epidemic has been the basis of government cattle cull policy, has warned that the disease could spread from cow to cow.

A NEW £2.5 million research programme into the causes of Gulf war syndrome will focus on multiple vaccinations, which alarmed the Department of Health even before the war.

NINE smugglers behind an international drugs ring foiled by the longest surveillance operation ever mounted by Customs were jailed at Bristol crown court. The operation netted cocaine worth £57 million and cannabis worth £8 million.

SIAMESE twins joined at the chest and abdomen have been successfully separated at Great Ormond Street Hospital and are "doing well" at home.

Hopes grow of deal to end BA strike

Seumas Milne and Paul Murphy

HOPES for a settlement of the British Airways dispute rose on Tuesday after the company allowed last week's strikers back to work, and leaders of 9,000 ground staff decided to reopen talks — rather than call strikes — over the sell-off of BA's catering operation.

The company hailed the decision as a "positive step", and made clear it now wants to strip away other obstacles to a deal with the Transport and General Workers' Union on the central dispute over the pay and conditions of cabin staff.

BA sources indicated that the company is now prepared to strengthen protection for existing cabin crew earnings, as part of a renegotiation of the imposed package at the heart of the dispute — so long as £42 million savings can still be made.

BA shares have underperformed the stock market over recent days, but financial analysts are pleased with the company's drive to cut costs. However, there are beginning to be fears that the cost of the dispute — 48 European, 28 domestic and seven long-haul flights out of Heathrow were cancelled on Monday because of the knock-on effect of last week's walkout — may be running out of control.

"Three days of action has probably cost British Airways £30 million in profits," one leading analyst said. "Against our current year profit forecasts of around £740 million, such a hit is not really material when set against the potential benefits. But if the dispute rumbles on, our worries are bound to increase."

The decision by ground staff shop stewards not to call industrial action means the chance of a second front opening up in the dispute has been sharply reduced.

BA had showered the catering staff affected by the sell-off plans with concessions, and ground staff appear to have had little stomach for a fight — though the package of sweeteners sets a precedent for other areas which the company may live to regret.

Nolan plans anti-sleaze crackdown

James Meikle

THE crusade against sleaze intensified last week as Lord Nolan's committee on standards recommended that public servants from ministers down should be jailed, fined or disqualified for misusing their office.

The committee proposes a new criminal offence to cover abuses such as wilful misconduct or unlawful spending by officials and elected members in central and local government, the police, magistrates and judiciary and other public bodies.

It also asked whether servants on university and further education college bodies, training and enterprise councils and housing associations should not also be liable.

It recommends that powers should be introduced to regulate the conduct of councillors, including suspension for up to three months for minor wrongdoing, such as bullying of officers or persistent leaking of confidential information.

The report was welcomed by Tony Blair, who said it was "time to make a new start on the ethical framework in local government".

The offence of "misuse of public office" would replace the current, Victorian system of surcharging councillors and officials.

Lord Nolan wrote to the Prime Minister: "Despite instances of corruption and misbehaviour, the vast majority of councillors and officers observe high standards of conduct. The number of people who have used their position in local government for their own ends is small.

"But a lack of clarity about standards of conduct can easily lead to wrongdoing."

The committee wants its proposals to fit into a three-part programme; the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has recommended a new offence of corruption for public servants, with a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment, and a select committee of both Houses of Parliament is investigating measures against bribery.

Lord Nolan was careful not to comment on possible penalties for the disgraced former ministers Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith, and other former MPs criticised by Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. At present, former MPs cannot be punished by the Commons for their behaviour while in office.

Lord Nolan's committee seems to believe this matter should be left to the new Committee of Standards and Privileges.

Other proposals published last week included creating standards committees on each local authority, to monitor behaviour and exercise disciplinary powers; greater transparency over planning decisions, especially where councillors were [illegible] their own authority planning permission; and a new structure for whistle-blowing.

● Sir Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service, is set to launch an investigation into a possible conflict of interest caused by the failure by Lord Simon, former chairman of BP and now minister for trade and competitiveness in Europe, to declare £2.1 million worth of BP shares.

The House of Lords has confirmed that the peer failed to record the holding in the Register of Lords' Interests.

The motion said the Department of Trade and Industry's assurance that Lord Simon's shares did not represent a conflict of interest was "unconvincing" and urged the minister to resign.

Information bill 'on hold'

Richard Norton-Taylor

PLANS for a Freedom of Information Act, once one of Labour's priorities, have been put off amid increasing signs that the Government intends to deprive the long-awaited measure of any real substance.

A white paper on the proposal, promised for this month, has been postponed until October. The decision is highly embarrassing for David Clark, the minister responsible for openness.

The cabinet committee is chaired by Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, and includes Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio. Both are known to be extremely wary of introducing a statutory "right to know" of the kind in place for years in most other modern democracies.

Some ministers are known to insist on a long list of exemptions in such an act. This includes all advice from officials as well as any information whose release could be claimed to interfere with the "effective administration of government".

Dr Clark says that Parliament rather than the courts should be the final arbiter of what information should be disclosed.

But the proposal is dismissed by Maurice Frankel, director of the Freedom of Information Campaign. "A legally enforceable right is essential" to ensure that decisions on disclosure are not taken "on the basis of political convenience", he says. "Since a government can generally rely on its Commons majority to support it even when it is plainly in the wrong, we cannot see how such a solution could be credible."



Nelson Mandela with his companion Graca Machel in London last week PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Smiling Mandela avoids talk of marriage

CHARLES and Camilla could learn a few lessons, *write Guardian reporters*. Nelson Mandela arrived in London last week with his new partner, Graca Machel, in close and smiling attendance.

Though he was coy about questions of marriage, Mr Mandela's smile revealed a man at ease with inquiries about romance. "Those are questions one doesn't discuss in public," Mr Mandela said, responding to inquiries about future marriage plans.

Asked to introduce Mrs Machel, the widow of the Mozambique president Samora Machel, he said: "I don't think I've got the status to do that."

But the South African president was keen not to take the limelight when they arrived at Essex university for Mrs Machel to be presented with an honorary degree for her work on the study of war and its effects on children. "It's her day today. She is the boss."

Mrs Machel was only too happy to oblige. Having risked her life for the revolution against Portuguese colonialism and then, as education minister in independent Mozambique, cut illiteracy by a fifth, she had no intention of walking in anybody's shadow.

"The university is proud to honour a distinguished leader of her country and of Africa — and an eminent international public servant," said the university orator during the presentation.

When Mrs Machel emerged from the ceremony, with her mortarboard and velvet cloak, to more jubilation, she took the praise with the magnanimity that has made her the partner of one of the world's favourite politicians.

"I don't take this recognition just for myself. I represent millions of children who have witnessed war. Now we must think how we can take this back to them," she said.

Asylum pay ruled illegal

Alan Travis

PAYMENTS made to 5,000 single asylum-seekers in London by local authorities to help them meet daily living costs after their welfare benefits were axed were last week ruled illegal by the High Court.

The Refugee Council claimed that the judgment meant councils would have to continue to provide destitute asylum-seekers with food vouchers.

The decision by Mr Justice Laws is likely to cost London's local authorities more than £1 million they had been planning to claw back from the Government.

The judge ruled in a test case involving Hammersmith and Fulham council and three asylum-seekers that the cash payments were *ultra vires* and so had not been properly authorised. The ruling only applies to single people, as such payments are legal to families under the Children Act.

The case stems from repeated court defeats suffered by the Tory government when it tried to withdraw welfare benefits from most asylum-seekers.

The High Court has previously ruled that under the 1948 National Assistance Act local authorities had a duty to "make arrangements to provide" food, shelter and the basics of life — but "for nothing else".

Nick Hardwick, the Refugee Council's chief executive, said it would be cheaper to allow asylum seekers to claim social security benefit, "rather than allow the chaos to continue".

Tobacco sponsorship ban to discourage smoking

Chris Mihill

TOBACCO sponsorship is to be phased out and the legal age for buying cigarettes could be raised from 16 to 18 in an attempt "to stop today's trendy youngsters filling tomorrow's cancer wards", Tessa Jowell, the public health minister, announced this week.

New figures from the Office for National Statistics for 1996 showed that at 15, 28 per cent of boys and 33 per cent of girls were regular smokers. In 1982, 24 per cent of boys of this age were smokers as were 25 per cent of girls.

Ms Jowell told an anti-smoking summit in London that steps would be taken to protect sports and the arts from any damage caused by a ban on sponsorship.

Richard Branson, head of the Virgin group, promised that his companies would pick up the cost or stage alternative events if tobacco companies pulled out of sponsoring Grand Prix racing or cricket.

Ms Jowell said a white paper on action to reduce smoking would be included in the Queen's Speech at the next session of Parliament in October 1998. "If tobacco were introduced today it would not stand the remotest chance of being a legal product."

Ms Jowell said the Government's anti-smoking policies had public support. "We want to see an end to tobacco advertising in the form of sports sponsorship, but we don't want to damage the sports themselves."

Sports and arts sponsorship by tobacco companies would be phased out to allow recipients to find alternative sponsors. Extra help would be focused on helping the poor stop smoking, as cigarette consumption was increasingly a habit of the least well off, she said.

Ms Jowell confirmed that the Government would look at raising the legal age to buy cigarettes. Clearer information on packets about the additives in cigarettes would also be considered, as would the idea of a levy on tobacco profits to fund health promotion.

● Pregnant women who smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day are more likely to have a son with behaviour problems, according to a team from the University of Chicago and the University of Pittsburgh.

They analysed 177 boys with conduct disorder. They identified mothers who smoked half a packet a day during pregnancy — and found that 80 per cent had problem sons.

The researchers suggest that the nicotine absorbed by the mother during pregnancy may disrupt foetal brain development. But another theory is that smoking might simply be a symptom of deeper stresses.

Teenage smoking
Percentage of 15-year-old boys and girls smoking regularly
35 30 25 20 15
Girls
Boys
82 84 86 88 90 92 93 94 95

Adult smoking
Percentage of men and women smoking regularly
50 40 30 20
Men
Women
74 76 78 80 82 84 86 88 90 92 94

Loyalist about-turn defuses crisis

David Sharrock

THE Orange Order pulled Northern Ireland back from the brink last week with a series of sweeping concessions to Catholic districts across the province.

In what was seen as the most astonishing step taken by the Protestant organisation this century, the order announced that four controversial parades scheduled for last weekend, the high point in its marching calendar, were to be re-routed.

The announcement came through a series of co-ordinated statements from district and county lodges. The first came from Ballynafeigh, which announced it was withdrawing from this year's annual demonstration in Belfast and therefore would not be walking down a mainly Catholic section of the Ormeau Road.

Orangemen in Co Londonderry then announced that they were switching the venue for their annual parade from Derry city to Limavady, 10 miles away. In Co Armagh, Orangemen said they would not march through the mainly nationalist Shambles area of Armagh city.

In the strongly nationalist border town of Newry, Orangemen said they, too, would forgo their right to march.

The Ballynafeigh statement states that the lodge retained its right to march its traditional route and would do so at a time of its own choosing. This is the formula which was first used last summer by another loyalist institution, the Apprentice Boys, and defused an explosive situation in Londonderry.

The decisions immediately defused a deepening atmosphere of gloom and fear and could mark a turning point in the affairs of the Orange Order, with signs that the moderate leadership has finally grasped the nettle and faced down its own hardliners. That could, in due course, lead to the first split in the organisation since the early years of this century.

Many hard-line loyalists were angry, opening up the prospect of a split in the Orange movement. There were also signs of a deeper power struggle within Unionism as the Rev Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionists, denounced the announcement, but David Ervine, leader of the loyalist Progressive Unionist Party which has strong links with the Ulster Volunteer Force, called it a victory for Orangeism.

Mr Paisley called the decision by the Orange Institution's Grand Lodge to cede their rights to march this year a "complete and total sell-out".

Privately, senior Orangemen are acutely conscious of the damage caused to the organisation's image by last week's scenes of violence that followed the Drumcree parade.

The announcement followed days of intense negotiations amid continuing widespread violence prompted by nationalist unrest over the decision by the Royal Ulster Constabulary's chief constable, Ronnie Flanagan, to force the parade by Portadown district Orange lodge through the mainly Catholic Garvaghy Road.

Within 24 hours gunmen had opened fire on British soldiers and police officers in Belfast. Two RUC officers, one a woman, and three soldiers were taken to hospital after up to 20 shots were fired at security forces manning a roadblock.

The IRA came immediately under pressure to call another ceasefire following warnings from unionist and nationalist politicians that time is running out for Sinn Fein.

Further attacks by the IRA over the weekend, despite the dramatic moves by the Orange Order to defuse confrontation, were held as evidence that it is not interested in constitutional politics.

As the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, called on the IRA to declare an "unequivocal" ceasefire, the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, warned the Government against "wishful thinking".

Ms Mowlam said: "Let's make sure we have a political process to offer the people of Northern Ireland that the constitutional parties are engaged in. And let the IRA Sinn Fein make their decision. The ball's in their court. We can't decide for them."

Mr Trimble said the rioting in Belfast and Londonderry, in which several RUC officers were injured, showed "the real character of Irish republicanism . . . They have been looking for an opportunity to create violence".

The reality was that the republican movement was not going to change. "Anybody who knows anything about the situation realises that. We must have an end to both the wishful thinking and also the bad priorities — the bad policies that some people base on wishful thinking."

The SDLP leader, John Hume, said that if an IRA ceasefire was not forthcoming politicians would press ahead without Sinn Fein.

"There has to be a total and absolute end to violence and everybody should be doing everything in their power to bring that about. And if there is no end to the violence they should try to reach agreement as quickly as possible and put it to the people in a referendum so we have, for the first time, an agreed society."

He praised the moral courage of Orangemen for re-routing or calling off last weekend's marches.

With the parades crisis now postponed for a year, attention will shift once more to the question of decommissioning when all-party talks resume this week in Belfast. Ms Mowlam said that the constitutional parties currently engaged in the talks had agreed a timetable for the issue to be determined by July 23.

Meanwhile the Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams, said the mass mobilisation of nationalists had played an important part in the Orange Order decision not to march through nationalist areas.

"I think it is very important in that it gives . . . everyone a breathing space. All right-thinking people want to ensure that this should be the last marching season where we have all of this tension and difficulty."

Tackling the Mideast gloom

YASSER ARAFAT met Tony Blair this week with the Middle East peace process totally bogged down, escalating violence on the West Bank, and the United States limiting itself to quiet and ineffective diplomacy. Not for the first time, a European initiative is being mentioned: what is new is the energy that a Labour government might apply and the desperate nature of the situation. Last week Derek Fatchett, the foreign office minister responsible for the Middle East, floated the proposal that Europe, with Britain in a leading role, should itself become "a leading partner" in reactivating the peace process. This would "complement", as he put it politely, the US effort. The difference between Washington's view and that of the European Union countries is illustrated by what President Clinton said on the subject in Madrid. He mentioned the Palestinians by name, saying that there would need to be "real security co-operation [with them] to keep down the violence". But having endorsed Binyamin Netanyahu's demand on the Palestinians, he failed to make an equivalent demand on Israel to deliver something worthwhile to Mr Arafat.

European governments can be even-handed in a way that the Clinton administration seems even less able to be than some of its predecessors. As Mr Fatchett put it, "we believe as passionately in security for Israelis as we do in justice for Palestinians" — and the other way around. In immediate terms this means that Israel must stop settlement building if it expects the Palestinians to deliver on security. In the longer term, it means a willingness to create a Palestinian entity that is viable and effectively independent. The alternative would be a divided patchwork on the Yugoslav model. Whether it actually calls itself a state need not be so important in a world where the sharp lines of nationhood are becoming blurred.

Last week in London Yossi Beilin, architect of the Oslo accords and foreign affairs spokesman of the Israeli Labour party, described the situation as "the lowest point since Madrid", with extremists on both sides gaining ground while the US had "just left some phone numbers for us to call". His pessimism is hardly exaggerated. Most Israeli commentators agree that Mr Netanyahu's strategy, though shrouded in mist, excludes any kind of final settlement which might be acceptable to the Palestinians, and that this perception of future deadlock — never mind the current stalemate — makes a resumption of large-scale violence more likely. There is also, as the Jordanian commentator Rami Khouri has put it, "a slow slide into political bestiality" with provocative gestures of crude racism on both sides.

Mr Beilin proposes a six-month freeze on settlement building while talks begin on a final solution, and urges Britain to propose such a package on behalf of the EU. It is hard to see why Mr Netanyahu should be swayed by Europe when he has snubbed milder criticism from the US. Though the best chance for the peace process lies in the implosion of the Likud government, Mr Netanyahu has again demonstrated his ability to survive internal challenge and may hang on till 2000. Yet though a European voice may be shrugged off in Jerusalem, it still needs to be articulated clearly enough to be heard in Washington, and to give comfort to a despairing region — and to Palestinians who are almost past despair.

Depriving ETA of vital oxygen

THE PARALLEL between the wave of Spanish protest aroused by ETA's latest atrocity and similar expressions of public emotion against the IRA in Northern Ireland is evident — and not very encouraging. Most terrorists who are prepared to kill or risk the lives of innocent victims have already crossed the threshold of common morality. If candlelit peace marches, appeals from religious figures or denunciations from high places could sway either ETA or the IRA, there would have been peace long ago. The scale of Monday's grief and anger after the murder of the young politician Miguel Angel Blanco is exceptional. Most previous protests have been local rather than national, and have mobilised tens of thousands rather than millions. But if ETA is on the decline, as most observers believe, its growing isolation is just as likely to spark more extremist acts.

ETA, like the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland, emerged at a time when the denial of minority rights was intense and provided a thinly plausible justification for the resort to violence. Again like the IRA, it has persisted in violence without taking note of any improvement in the situation. ETA began its operations when the voice of the Basque people was stifled in the iron grip of General Franco. Since then ETA has shown a steady decline in Basque support as the autonomy granted by post-Franco governments has led to the creation of regional governments and a special status for Basques and Catalans. But ETA's numerical isolation may only provoke more extreme violence — the possibility against which the Spanish prime minister, José Maria Aznar, warned on Monday.

ETA's decline so far has also been offset by the attitude of many Basques who recoil from the decisive step of repudiating *los chicos* — the boys. This lingering element of revolutionary romanticism is not confined to ETA's political wing Herri Batasuna, but can be found in the much larger Basque National party (PNV), even though this is now politically allied to Mr Aznar's ruling Popular party. Whether the murder of Mr Blanco will finally crack this shell of support may be a crucial factor in determining ETA's future. It is essential that Mr Aznar should not succumb to the temptation of a return to the dirty tricks tactics of counter-terrorism in the 1980s. The revival of government death squads would quickly dispel the qualms of ETA's equivocal supporters. More energetic measures could be taken against ETA's collaborators and to curb its extortion of funds from Basque business. But Mr Aznar should let public opinion take its course, hoping that — in a reversal of classic guerrilla theory — the terrorist fish will eventually be deprived of their water.

Police bluff that must be called

JACK STRAW has sought to be the police officers' friend. Now life has become more complicated. The police are divided over a crucial issue: police corruption. Chief constables are dismayed by the way in which a small core of corrupt officers are evading disciplinary action through various procedural manoeuvres. The head of the second biggest police force in England, Edward Crew, Chief Constable of West Midlands Police, believes there are officers in his force who would have been automatically dismissed for dishonesty if they had been working in a supermarket but who remain in his force because of protective disciplinary practices. Most of the other 40 or so chief constables concur.

One problem is the standard of proof needed to dismiss an officer. It is set at far higher than applies in civil cases or industrial tribunals. Then there is the old "double jeopardy" hurdle: the ludicrous rule under which evidence used against a police officer on a corruption charge in criminal courts cannot be used again in quite separate disciplinary hearings. Finally, there is the increasing practice under which officers charged with corruption avoid disciplinary hearings by taking sick leave, retiring on grounds of ill-health and, to add insult to injury, are then able to claim index-linked pensions.

The Police Federation, which represents the rank and file, is outraged. They believed the police complaints system was settled. The former home secretary, Michael Howard, had originally signalled his support for a more effective disciplinary procedure but backed down as the election approached. Now the Federation is trying to apply the same pressure to Mr Straw. He must robustly resist.

Compared with three decades ago, there is far less corruption in the police. A combination of anti-corruption teams, tougher ethical rules, and closer monitoring by the Police Complaints Authority, the media and police inspectors have helped cut back corruption. But with the huge sums that can be made from drugs, corruption continues.

The Federation is perverse in its defence of the indefensible. It is only further eroding the reputation of a service it purports to defend. The Federation has dug in and with the same arrogance of power which led it to pursue 95 defamation cases against the media in 33 months — many of which were fair reports of suspicious police behaviour — has sought to push corruption under the mat. Mr Straw should call their bluff and insist on a more robust police disciplinary procedure.

Nato puts its future on the line in Bosnia

Martin Woollacott

TEETH and tail is the jargon used to describe fighting soldiers on the one hand and the great wedge of logistical and organisational apparatus that propels them on the other. We saw both on display in a week where Nato met in Madrid to invite three states to join and British troops in Bosnia made the first serious effort to seize indicted war criminals. In Spain, a positive crush of politicians, officials and generals celebrated their decision and covered up their continuing disagreements in a familiar cloud of rhetoric. In Bosnia, a handful of men moved efficiently into action.

If the arrests signal the start of a real campaign to pick up accused men or, failing that, to isolate and out-manoeuvre them, they could turn out to be a turning point for Bosnia and for Nato. All the agonising over whether or not the expansion of Nato is a good thing has tended to obscure the fact that if the Nato intervention in Bosnia ends in failure, it will not matter much whether in the future the alliance comes to include Poland and Hungary, or Romania and Bulgaria. Bosnia is Nato's only major post-cold war success, if the Gulf conflict is left out of account, and it is a very fragile one. Bosnia has been slipping, month after month since the Dayton agreement stopped the shooting, not only toward a condition of partition but toward renewed warfare. If such a war were to start, after Nato troops have been reduced in number or after they have left next year, it could break the alliance.

Talk of Nato's responsibility to defend Warsaw or Budapest seems to agitate United States senators but is nothing more than a fantasy, or, at best, a metaphor that redefines the identity of certain east European countries. It is yesterday's problem dressed up as something that still matters. Bosnia is today's problem, because Nato either can or cannot meet what is by far the the most important challenge to European security, that in former Yugoslavia. If it can, benefits will flow that will outweigh the difficulties of the first phase of expansion. And further expansion, together with a better relationship with Russia, would almost certainly follow real success in Bosnia. The states of southeastern Europe — candidates for the second wave of Nato membership, such as Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria — would be ineluctably drawn to such success, while the core Nato members would want to build on it. Russia, equally, would want to be a part of it. The fate of Bosnia, the fate of Nato and the enlargement process are closely interconnected.

Two new foreign ministers, Britain's Robin Cook and the US's Madeleine Albright, had both made it clear that they wanted to see action on arrests. What happened on the road near Omarska was the result of this new approach. The decision is not an easy one, since a vigorous arrest policy could lead to confrontations and casualties, a particularly difficult point for the Americans.

Both in the United States and in Europe, the foreign policy and military establishment is split over what to do. It is likely that the arrests represent a compromise rather than a decision to try to pick up large nu[…] bers of the indicted criminals. B[…] more are arrested, others, such[…] Radovan Karadzic in his co[…] with Mrs Biljana Plavsic, coul[…] put at a disadvantage in internal po[…] litical fights, or hampered by [the] need to take extensive physical [pre]cautions. There is at least a cha[nce] of tipping the balance against [the] criminal-political class in Bosnia.

They are malign powers in [the] present just as they were in the p[ast]. They are the core of the g[ang]sterised élite that rules in the Bo[sn]ian Serb republic and in parts [of] Croatian-controlled Bosnia. It [is] they who live well off illegal m[ono]polies, smuggling, and other r[ack]ets while ordinary men and wo[men] are desperate. It is they who ha[ve] refused or ignored the conditi[ons] which the international commu[nity] tried, fairly feebly, to put on rec[on]struction aid. The failure to use [in] any systematic way, the instrum[ents] at Nato's disposal in Bosnia h[as] been glaring. Time and again, co[n]ditionality has been abandoned a[nd] the crooks have got the money a[nd] the contracts. If the soldiers ha[ve] failed to arrest those who sho[uld] have been the first targets, the ci[vil]ians have failed to withhold fu[nds] from those they should have tried [to] dislodge, who are, in most ca[ses,] the same men.

AS A RESULT huge sums [of] money have gone to div[ide] rather than to unite Bo[snia]. Some of that money, for insta[nce,] was spent by the Serbs recently [on] printing 10,000 fake identity cards [in] preparation for September lo[cal] elections. Roads and bridges ha[ve] been improved, but only t[o] strengthen communications wi[thin,] not between, the different parts.

The various guises of interv[en]tion in Bosnia conceal the fact th[at it] has been Nato's affair from the c[om]ment in 1992 when half of N[ato's] Northern Army Group headqua[r]ters was transferred from Germ[any] to Bosnia. In an article in a rece[nt] issue of the periodical War Repo[rt,] which contains an illuminati[ng] range of pieces on Nato expansi[on,] James Gow shows how Nato depl[oy]ment, enlargement, and the re[la]tionship with Russia intertwine i[n] Bosnia. Poland and the Cz[ech] Republic, as an earnest of their se[ri]ousness about membership, s[ent] peace-keeping contingents. H[un]gary became, effectively, a forw[ard] Nato base. Partly because of wh[at] happened in Bosnia, the Hunga[ri]ans and Romanians moved into [a] new, better relationship. Russ[ia] joined the Nato force on speci[al] terms of its own, which prefigur[ed] the broader political arrangemen[ts] that are embodied in the Nato-Ru[ss]ian charter. Its complaints a[nd] about "cowboy operations" refl[ect] both the extent and the limits [of] those arrangements.

Because of the arguments [of] France and other Latin countr[ies] that the first wave should includ[e at] least one southeast European st[ate,] eastward expansion has also co[me] to be connected with the other [de]bate within Nato, over the cond[i]tions for French and perha[ps] Spanish reintegration. The questi[on] of whether Nato prevails or fails [in] Bosnia is fundamental to the resolu[]tion of all the other issues that [the] alliance faces.

Le Monde

Europe needs its voice heard in Nato

COMMENT
Pascal Boniface

IT IS the United States which is now redefining, on its own, Europe's strategic and political structure. The driving force of European construction is no longer the Franco-German "couple". An idea close to the heart of George Bush's secretary of state, James Baker, during the dying days of the cold war — that of a Europe stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok — is now taking shape.

Its capital is Washington. Its institutional framework has been supplied by Nato, which, now relieved of the obligations of collective defence, is playing an increasingly prominent political role. It has become the instrument of US influence in Europe. Nato will be to Europe what the Organisation of American States (OAS) was to Latin America in the sixties: a vehicle for regional co-operation, but one that operates in a fundamentally inequitable way.

Priorities and policies are defined by the main player, the role of other members of the cast being to acquiesce and to put into practice. While all the talk is of defending the higher interests of the community as a whole, the actual policy implemented is in all respects that of the leading country.

The way the process of Nato enlargement has been taking place is significant. It does not meet any security objective. Never before in their history have Poland, Hungary or the Czech Republic been under such a negligible military threat.

US actions are motivated by domestic policy (20 million of its citizens are of central European origin, and most are concentrated in 14 key states comprising 194 presidential electors, a third of the total) and have a strategic objective. Europe's needs are not taken into consideration.

The US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, has said quite frankly that the enlargement of Nato is not an answer to some new Russian threat, but is motivated by the need to create an integrated Europe. The Americans, then, are the self-proclaimed architects of European integration. They feel it would be dangerous if they were not in control of the process, since they alone have a global vision.



President Clinton on a visit to new Nato member Poland last week reviews an honour guard in Warsaw along with his Polish counterpart, Aleksander Kwasniewski PHOTOGRAPH: BLAKE SELL

After taking a decision to enlarge Nato that satisfied no strategic objective, the US then laid down the law on which countries should be admitted. While nine European countries argued that Romania and Slovenia should also be allowed to join, the US unilaterally declared that only three countries would form the first wave.

With just one "no" and nine "ayes", the "no" won the day. It illustrated Washington's conception of what the transatlantic dialogue is all about: debate is allowed only if there is a consensus. If views diverge, then the US decides on its own. The genuine willingness to consult that was a feature of Bill Clinton's presidency in its early days is now a thing of the past.

This brutish behaviour is sometimes accompanied by tokens of courtesy that have purely to do with form, once the problems of content have been dealt with.

The next phase of Nato enlargement will also be organised according to a timetable drawn up in Washington. It will involve once neutral countries that recently joined the European Union, the aim being that EU frontiers should not be too different from Nato's, and above all not more extensive. This being the case, one may legitimately wonder what would happen if the European nations were in a position today to sign a new Treaty of Rome, Washington would surely frown on any attempt by Europe to establish an autonomous structure.

Enlargement will carry a cost that can be calculated in widely diverging ways. The only certainty is that Washington will foot the smallest part of the bill (10-15 per cent), and that the rest of the cost will be shouldered by newcomers to Nato and its existing European members. It is a fine example of taxation without representation, and damning evidence of hegemonism: the cost of a purely national policy is to be borne collectively.

Irrespective of the fact that France has clumsily painted itself into a corner over the issue of the southern command, it is the whole process of Nato's Europeanisation that has broken down.

With admirable consistency, every single decision taken by France since December 1995 has run contrary to its own interests and those of Europe. Although it has come to symbolise feisty independence from the US, France has knuckled under at a time when the need to stand up to Washington has never been greater. Instead of sticking to its generally accepted role — not that of a substitute for the US (it does not have the resources), but of a country capable of conceiving and launching an alternative policy — it has made a desperate bid for the rank of second-in-command, even though it does not possess Germany's economic clout or Britain's influence.

France cannot become integrated if it wishes to carry any weight. But, while remaining an active and loyal partner of the Alliance (which remains the keystone of European security today), it should be examining the prospects for Europe's future strategic autonomy.

THE great paradox is that Washington's success has come at a time when it dreads more than ever the cost of its own commitment. It defines Nato policy on its own, unilaterally imposes its own candidate for the job of United Nations secretary-general and lays down the terms under which it will pay off its arrears, interprets the rules of international trade as it sees fit, tries to destroy Europe's aerospace and defence industry, and strives to be seen as peacemaker throughout the world, from the Middle East and Africa to Cyprus and Northern Ireland. But it makes very sure not to commit itself directly at a strategic level if any military risk is involved.

Can one be a superpower while adhering unswervingly to the "zero bodybags" principle? Is US decision-making not at risk of seizing up in the face of real danger?

There is an element of autosuggestion in the way the rest of the world accepts a triumphant US. Thirty years after Mao's celebrated phrase, the US has become a paper tiger: more frightening to the rest of the world than it is powerful, in actual fact.

It would surely be to the Europeans' advantage if they woke up to the fact that they are not as weak as they themselves imagine.

Pascal Boniface is head of the Institute of International and Strategic Relations at Paris-XIII University
(July 10)

Cambodia is 'back at square one'

Norodom Ranariddh, Cambodia's ousted PM, talks to **Bruno Philip**

"BY CARRYING out a coup, Hun Sen [the 'second' joint premier] has called into question the composition of a government that grew out of the 1991 Paris agreement and the UN-supervised elections of 1993. We're back at square one.

"Resistance will be organised inside and outside Cambodia. The press has often described the situation as a case of rivalry between the two prime ministers. But Hun Sen had no choice but to carry out the coup. Now he has succeeded, he says he is the person who has power and legitimacy. Remember that we agreed to work with him to prevent the bloody civil war from continuing after the 1993 poll.

"It was a mistake for us to encourage the massive desertion of the Khmer Rouge — now that he has got rid of that threat, Hun Sen is free to turn against us. The Khmer Rouge were a pretext for his coup. He says I betrayed the government and people by negotiating with the Khmer Rouge leader, Khieu Samphan. But Hun Sen had earlier talked to Ieng Sary [a former Khmer Rouge leader who broke with Pol Pot] without being accused of betraying any law.

"My aim was to cause the break-up of the Khmer Rouge, not to strengthen my political position. Without being approached by me, Khieu Samphan and the rest of the Khmer Rouge, apart from Pol Pot, have decided to join the national resistance. The Pol Pot era is over. I managed to negotiate not only Khieu Samphan's surrender but the easing out of Pol Pot.

"Hun Sen had to carry out the coup because he knew he was going to lose the 1998 election. What he lacks is legitimacy: he was brought to power by the Vietnamese, and he lost the 1993 election. I and my father [King Norodom Sihanouk] saved him from the people's verdict by forming a two-headed government.

"I could see the coup coming. On July 4 my generals said to me: 'Hun Sen is going to attack. You must go, because if he succeeds we'll have no one outside the country to be our ambassador.'

"I have had no more than a word or two with my father. More than ever he can play a decisive role. I don't think he should recognise the Hun Sen regime. He should adopt a position of neutrality. Before thinking of returning home, I must start mobilising expatriate Cambodians and the international community."

(July 8)

Algeria releases FIS leader

Jean-Pierre Tuquoi

ON JULY 7 the number three in the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Abdelkader Hachani, was given a five-year prison sentence by an Algiers court for crimes against state security. As he had already spent five years on remand, he was released the following day. His release was described as "a positive gesture" by the FIS's official spokesman outside Algeria, Abdelkrim Ould Adda.

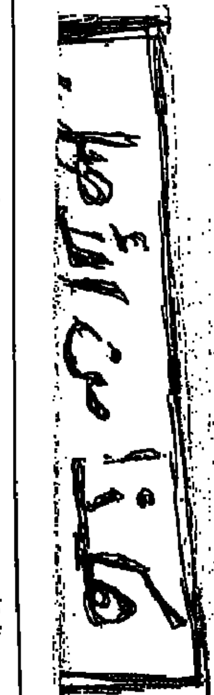
Hachani was pale and limping when he entered the court. He told his lawyers he had been roughed up by two men in plain clothes before being brought to the courtroom. He refused a medical examination in case it delayed the trial further.

He was charged with publishing a statement in the daily El Khabar a few days after the government had cancelled the second round of the 1992 elections, which the FIS was poised to win. In it he argued that the army could fulfil its role as guardian of the country's unity, security and stability only if it prevented the junta that was "plotting against the people, its army and Islam" from getting a chance "to ignite the spark of fratricidal confrontation that would harm Algeria and the Muslim nation".

Hachani gave a spirited defence of his statement in court in front of political figures and opposition leaders.

The public prosecutor accused Hachani of appealing to an army which, officially, is no longer represented within the National Liberation Front (FLN), the former single party, and is not allowed to get involved in politics. The statement was, he said, a call for rebellion and disobedience, and should carry a 10-year sentence for Hachani and a four-year sentence for journalists who published it. The court decided otherwise: it sentenced Hachani to five years in jail, as well as stripping him of his civil rights for three years, and acquitted the journalists.

(July 10)



Catholics 'connived in dirty war'

Henri Tincq

THE Argentine church still has a considerable way to go before it can wipe the slate clean as regards its behaviour during the "dirty war" waged by the military junta that held power between 1976 and 1983.

Revelations published in the July issue of the Italian review Jesus confirm the extent to which some members of the church hierarchy connived with those responsible for the crackdown in Argentina.

In a long interview, a former chief chaplain to the air force — whose name is not given, but who authorised publication — defends the junta's leader, General Jorge Videla, describing him as "a good Catholic", and exonerating him from responsibility for the orders that were given.

"It's not my fault — it's not me who draws up the lists," the general repeatedly told the chaplain. In the chaplain's view, the aim of the crackdown was "to purge the atmosphere of anything that was expressly communist".

Questioned about Alice Dumon and Léonie Duquet, two French nuns murdered in 1977, he replies curtly: "They had put themselves in a situation they needn't have put themselves in."

The airmen who took part in eliminating opponents of the regime — who were tortured, drugged and dropped into the sea, according to revelations by Flight-lieutenant Adolfo Scilingo — are the chaplain's "friends", and they now feel "great remorse".

The interviewer, Giovanni Ferro, asks the chaplain what he said to the airmen. "That life in the army means war, a fight in which I can never know if the person facing me is innocent or guilty. It's a case of my life or his."

The chaplain describes how Catholic activists in his parish were caught "redhanded" as they were carrying out acts of subversion, and how they then "disappeared".

Commenting on the action of army officers, who were defending "the government, Argentina and democracy", the chaplain says: "If the officers had not done what they did, Argentina would today be in a situation worse than that of Cuba."

During the seven dark years of military rule, most Argentine bishops kept silent, unlike the Chilean episcopate, which raised its voice against General Augusto Pinochet.

Most of the old bishops have now been replaced. The episcopate has acknowledged its responsibility and admitted that "many sons of the church took part in an immoral and appalling" process of repression.

But human rights organisations have long memories. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, an organisation of mothers of the "disappeared", have just levelled accusations at one of the most senior figures in the Roman curia, Cardinal Pio Laghi, papal nuncio in Argentina from 1974 to 1980.

In a complaint lodged with an Italian court, they accuse him of "co-responsibility" for the murders. The Vatican has described the charges as "libellous and completely unfounded". Yet the revelations published by the review Jesus show just how difficult it still is for the Argentine church to come to terms with its conscience.

(July 5)



Ploughing with oxen high in the Peruvian Andes, where El Niño has created a drought

El Niño back on the warpath

Nicole Bonnet in Lima on a climatic anomaly that poses a threat to Latin America's Pacific coastline

EL NIÑO ("the baby Jesus") has struck again. Heavy rainfall and flooding triggered by this warm Pacific ocean current have so ravaged Ecuador's banana and sugar-cane plantations this year that on July 3 the Ecuadorian president, Fabian Alarcon, ordered a state of emergency.

The coasts of Peru and Ecuador are normally washed by the cool waters of the Humboldt current. The El Niño Southern Oscillation (Enso), to give it its full scientific name, is a climatic anomaly which from time to time disturbs the atmosphere in the whole of the Pacific basin, causing torrential rain to beat down on the coastal deserts of Ecuador and Peru, and, conversely, bringing drought to the high plateaux of Bolivia and southern Peru at the peak of what should be the rainy season.

Peruvian weather experts have confirmed information provided by Nasa and the Japanese meteorological office, which both detected early signs that El Niño was on the warpath this year. The ocean temperature is 4-6C higher than normal, much to the delight of bathers and surfers. But farmers, fishermen and economists are pessimistic.

If it persists this year, the El Niño phenomenon could prove to be as cataclysmic as it was between December 1982 and March 1983, when it killed 200 people, made 300,000 homeless in northern Peru and caused $1 billion worth of damage.

The US-based National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates that at a global level — in other words, taking into account drought in South Africa and Australia, extremely heavy rainfall in southern China and hurricanes in Hawaii — the number of indirect victims of the 1982-83 El Niño phenomenon was 630,000 (including 30,000 dead), and that more than $13 billion worth of damage was caused.

In the longer term, El Niño is causing the tropical Andean glaciers to melt increasingly fast, resulting in a temperature increase in the troposphere and lower rainfall. Glaciers, which are particularly sensitive to climatic anomalies, provide invaluable records of variations over the past few decades, not to say centuries. They are the most reliable indicators of global warming.

Bernard Francou is co-director with Bernard Pouyaud of the French scientific programme Tropical Snow and Glaciers (NGT), whose aim is to set up monitoring equipment on representative glaciers throughout the world's tropical zone. The two scientists began their research in the tropical Andes, where 99 per cent of such glaciers are to be found.

Since 1991 they have set up equipment on two glaciers in Bolivia, Zongo (6,000m) and Chacaltaya (6,400m). Core samples taken from borings into the ice have made it possible to calculate the rainfall of the past few decades with great accuracy, as well as El Niño's influence over a period of thousands of years.

Under the NGT programme, three 110m deep core samples are currently being taken from the glacier of the Bolivian volcano Sajama.

The samples, weighing two tonnes each, will be taken down from the volcano by balloon. This feat will be photographed and filmed by the National Geographic Magazine. The ice will be put in a refrigerated lorry at base camp, as it has to be kept at a temperature of minus 15C. "That's very important if we want to be able to extract, in the lab, bubbles in the ice that contain little bits of atmosphere," says Francou. "Their analysis will enable us to piece together climatic fluctuations that have taken place over the past 15,000-20,000 years."

Isotopic analysis of the components of the ice — oxygen, hydrogen, nitrate, sodium and dust — will complement results already obtained by the same team from its work on the Quelcaya and Huascaran glaciers in Peru.

"Sometimes we find traces of volcanic explosions, like that of the eruption of Hayna Puchina, near Arequipa in southern Peru," says Francou. "When we discovered that particular stratum in the ice, we knew from records of volcanic explosions in the 17th century that it had reached a level that corresponded to about the year 1700."

Since the beginning of the eighties, Andean glaciers have been melting increasingly fast. Work carried out between 1993 and 1996 by the French team in Peru showed that from 1980 on they shrank three times faster than they had during the previous decade. In Bolivia the rate was five times faster than during the four preceding decades.

This deglaciation, which began in the second half of the 19th century and reduced the size of smaller glaciers by up to 50 per cent, has parallels elsewhere in the world. Stefan Hastenrath, a scientist with the department of oceanic studies at the University of Wisconsin, has come up with evidence of 75 per cent deglaciation on Mount Kenya, in Africa, since the beginning of the century. Glaciers in the Alps are also apparently threatened.

The melting of Andean glaciers is particularly worrying because they constitute huge reservoirs of water which offset shortages during the dry season (April-November). The 10 million inhabitants of La Paz, Quito and Lima get much of their drinking water from melt-water.

Melt-water is also essential to Ecuador on the Pacific slopes of the Andes, and particularly all along the Peruvian coast. The water supply from glaciers has already become insufficient. There is a chronic shortage of hydroelectric power in Ecuador. Water is rationed for much of the year in Peru, and desertification continues apace.

Tropical Andean glaciers have ceased to play their role as a renewable source of water. If the present trend were to continue, it is to be feared they may disappear altogether over the next few decades.

(July 6-7)

Capitalism turns Boris into a lousy lover

Jean-Baptiste Naudet in Moscow

SEX is the subject of some controversy in Russia. Is the country going through a liberating sexual revolution, as some claim? Or did the demise of communism, with all its moral taboos and ample leisure time, spell the end of an exciting and much-practised activity?

Once banned erotic or pornographic publications are doing a thriving business. The Russian edition of Playboy, launched in July 1995, has a circulation of 100,000, while fossilised survivors of the Soviet press have seen their sales plummet.

The atmosphere is electric at several late-night Moscow dives. At the trendy Starving Duck young people dance on the bar counter and rip off their shirts and blouses (and sometimes their underpants). Professional striptease shows have become the norm in nightclubs.

Advertising makes liberal use of sex. The "oldest profession in the world", which had no official existence under communism, has invaded downtown Moscow. Recently, a publisher brought out a Guide To Moscow Prostitutes. The time when people did not hazard a French kiss in the street is well and truly over.

Yet Russians complain in private that sex is not what it used to be. And they point an accusing finger at capitalism. A young woman quoted in a long report on the subject in the English language Moscow Times said that in the old days, sex was the main outlet of people's energy. Nowadays men were simply not interested in sex — they channelled all their time, urges and desires into their work.

However, some research suggests that Russians are among the most sexually active people. According to a 1995 report by a condom manufacturer, they make love on average 133 times a year, whereas the world average is 109 times. But in a 1994 report in the Russian daily Sevodnya, women interviewees said they made love only 36 times a year, and men only once a month.

These contradictory results and the lack of any comparative data covering the Soviet period make it difficult to assess the true situation, particularly as the increase in cases of syphilis (up 100 per cent in 10 years) and the advent of Aids have disrupted the pattern of sexual activity. Where there seems to be agreement is that the pattern in Russia is much the same as in Western countries.

Yet sex education is still sadly inadequate: abortion remains the main method of birth control (3 million a year). The education ministry has tried to bring up to date the part of the syllabus known as "the morals and psychology of family life" under the Soviet system.

But many feel its new sex education syllabus is too explicit. One of the questions asked of pupils is: "Which is the most sensitive part of the vagina?" Following pressure from the Orthodox church, the syllabus will now be given an overhaul. Sex remains a sensitive issue in Russia.

(July 5)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Protests Reflect Instability in Kenya

Stephen Buckley in Nairobi

GABRIEL NYANJUI, 51, is not a politician. He is not an activist. He is a Kenyan businessman who never took part in political protest.

Until Monday last week.

That day he and thousands of Kenyans, most of them young men, participated in demonstrations that led to at least 11 deaths nationwide in some of the worst violence to jolt this East African country since it adopted multi-party politics six years ago.

Nyanjui, who owns a general store, was not among those demonstrators who hurled stones, started fires, stormed through neighborhoods and sang protest songs. Instead, he watched aghast as police chased demonstrators out of a downtown park and beat one, leaving him bleeding on the ground.

Nyanjui said he understood the demonstrators' frustration. "I have a lot of bitterness, because this government has been so oppressive," he said.

Political observers have expressed fear that last week's clashes — which led to the government closing the University of Nairobi — portend long months of instability in a nation known more for its stunning wildlife and breathtaking vistas than for civil strife.

The political violence that has visited this nation of 27 million throughout this year comes with the approach of Kenya's second general election since the advent of multi-party rule in 1991. The government has not yet announced a date for the voting.

President Daniel arap Moi, in power since 1979, won the first election in 1992 and is expected to be re-elected. But his grip on power appears to have slipped in recent months, as the clamor for constitutional reform has swelled in the wake of the upcoming vote.

Political analysts here say the recent protests provide evidence of an angry electorate, disappointed that multi-party politics has failed to transform one of sub-Saharan Africa's most corrupt regimes into a fair, transparent government. The fall of one of Moi's longtime allies, Mobutu Sese Seko — the deposed dictator of Congo, formerly called Zaire — also has helped sharpen tensions here.



Police surround a student during last week's demonstrations in Nairobi

Kenya is in "a political crisis," one diplomat said, adding: "This is going to be a long conversation. A lot more has to happen before closure is found. Hopefully, the government will see that it needs to change."

The first major protests this year came in March, when a student activist — who had accused the police of kidnapping and beating him last year — died in a mysterious explosion in his dormitory room.

Since late May, demonstrations have exploded into violence three more times. The government has met the actions with overwhelming police and paramilitary presence. On Monday, among other things, the police shot at students, grabbed passengers from buses and raided an Anglican cathedral in downtown Nairobi, lobbing tear gas canisters and setting upon numerous members of the congregation.

The police reaction has alarmed many Kenyans. "The government is feeling increasingly vulnerable," said Gibson Kamau Kuria, a human rights lawyer who helped organize last week's demonstration. "It cannot govern by consent, so it must use force."

Opposition politicians and activists say their goal is to goad the government toward constitutional reforms that they consider basic for a functioning democracy. They want the constitution to allow a coalition government; because coalitions are not allowed, Moi was able to hang onto power in 1992 despite winning only 38 per cent of the vote.

They also seek repeal of the Public Order Act, which requires a permit for any gathering of nine or more Kenyans, and want to rescind the Chief Authority Act, which officials have invoked to break up political and civic education meetings held in private homes.

The fall of Mobutu left Moi as the last major authoritarian ruler in East and Central Africa, a fact not lost on Kenyans. Comparisons between the two leaders come easily. Both led their countries into devastating poverty. Corruption became a way of life for their people. And both leaders mastered the art of crippling the political opposition by dividing it.

The fall of Mobutu has given the fractured opposition new determination to topple Moi. Although no rebel movement appears to be on the horizon yet, talk of a "Kabila solution" runs through political conversations on the street. "Kenyans are saying to themselves, why are we the last ones with a dictator?" said Martha Kurua, an opposition member of Parliament. "If the Zairians can set themselves free, why can't we?"

Wife Pleads For Jailed Iran Writer

Nora Boustany

FARIDEH SARKUHI, wife of jailed Iranian writer Faraj Sarkuhi, has the ashen pallor of someone who can still breathe, but who has stopped really living.

She exists with her troubled thoughts and stoic courage, touring foreign capitals to keep alive the case of her husband, an activist who signed a declaration in 1994 calling for freedom of literary expression in Iran's Islamic Republic and now is in jail there, awaiting trial on charges of espionage and other activities against the state.

She hopes to link his fate to the agenda of Western governments in their ongoing standoff with Tehran, and pleads for kinder gestures from a more moderate leadership in Tehran.

After direct threats against him and the mysterious killings of several Iranian men of letters, Sarkuhi sent his wife and two children to Berlin last year. His last visit with them was in March 1996.

His plan was to stick it out in Iran while he could still write, his wife recalls. But Iranian intelligence agents picked him up on January 27, coercing him into false confessions on trumped-up charges of espionage, according to a letter he wrote during a brief period out of captivity.

Sarkuhi surmised that he would be used to generate propaganda against Germany to counter embarrassment over a Berlin court's finding of high-level Iranian involvement in the 1992 assassination of the leader of Iran's dissident Kurdish Democratic Party at a Berlin restaurant.

The court, in convicting an Iranian and three Lebanese in the slaying, said they were acting on the orders of, among others, Iran's intelligence minister, Ali Fallahian, and the country's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei.

"I doubt that he will survive this experience . . . but I keep wishing otherwise," Sarkuhi said of her husband during a visit to Washington last week.

Her crusade and the response in Paris, Bonn and Brussels is what has spared his life so far, she believes.

The European Union has made it plain that future relations with Iran will depend on the outcome of his trial, for which it has requested observer status.

Farideh Sarkuhi went to Washington to connect with the Iranian community, Amnesty International and PEN, the international association of writers, which sent Iran's President-elect Mohammed Khatemi a letter last month signed by writers Arthur Miller and Edward Said.

"In the past, you have spoken in favor of creating a free forum of ideas," the two Americans wrote. "Sarkuhi's only crime is his attempt to pursue this same vision. We appeal to you to bring influence to bear on his case."

His wife laments tearfully that "at times I miss him, at others I just fear for his life. At times, however, I think he has accomplished what he believes in and I am very proud."

Clinton Rejects Genetic Bias in Insurance

Rick Weiss

PRESIDENT Clinton on Monday endorsed legislation making it illegal for health insurance companies to discriminate against healthy people on the basis of their genetic inheritance and helping to assure the privacy of genetic information.

Clinton's call for legislation with more protections against genetic discrimination than those included in last year's Kassebaum-Kennedy health law comes as rapid-fire biological discoveries are giving doctors and researchers increasing ability to predict who will succumb to various inherited diseases.

Already, widely available blood tests can reveal whether a person harbors aberrant genes that increase the risk of getting breast cancer, colon cancer, melanoma, or brain diseases such as Alzheimer's and Huntington's. Dozens of other predictive genetic tests are available through research studies and may make their way to the market in the next few years.

In some cases the information can motivate a person to get more frequent checkups or take preventive action. But genetic information is imprecise and can stigmatize healthy people. Public policy regarding its use has lagged behind the science.

Clinton's decision to push for heightened protections reflects recommendations in a report due to be presented to the president this week by Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala. The report, based on findings of a federal task force, warns that the potential benefits of genetic testing may never be realized if people reject the tests out of fear that the information may be used against them.

A number of genetic discrimination cases have come to light in recent years, most of them involving people who were denied health insurance because of test results indicating they were at increased risk of cancer or other diseases. In some cases people have been discriminated against simply for having requested genetic tests, as insurers assumed that anyone asking for such a test was probably at increased risk for an inherited disease.

The legislation endorsed by Clinton is a slightly modified version of a bill introduced in January by Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, D-New York, that already has bipartisan support with more than 135 co-sponsors. The president's decision to get involved could rejuvenate a Senate bill with language identical to the House version, introduced by Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine.

"The president is well aware that people are both excited and nervous by all the recent changes rooted in the biological revolution, and he believes that [the legislation] will provide a security blanket," said Christopher Jennings, deputy assistant to the president for health policy development.

The president's hopes of warming the Senate to his plan were bolstered last weekend when Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tennessee, agreed to back the effort. Frist's support was considered crucial, administration sources said, because he is the Senate's sole physician and chairs the subcommittee on public health and safety.

The Slaughter legislation would prohibit health insurers from denying, cancelling, refusing to renew or changing the terms, premiums or conditions of health coverage on the basis of genetic information. It also would prevent health insurers from demanding a genetic test as a condition of coverage and, with few exceptions, would require a patient's written consent before the insurer could disclose genetic information to a third party. Companies found in violation of these protections could be sued for compensation and also would be liable for punitive damages.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Cambodia's Hopes for Peace Crumble

Keith B. Richburg
and R. Jeffrey Smith

FOR ONE brief instant — a few years, really, but a relatively short span of recent history — it appeared that Cambodia's long curse of conflict and suffering might finally be over.

A peace deal brokered in Paris and a $3 billion United Nations operation had ended two decades of warfare. King Norodom Sihanouk was restored to the throne he lost 20 years earlier in a coup. An election, although troubled and violence-plagued, was held on schedule in 1993. The notorious Khmer Rouge guerrillas looked like a spent force. And the country's two prominent political rivals, Prince Norodom Ranariddh and ex-communist Hun Sen, agreed to share power.

This was, it was said, the United Nations' major success story in the world.

Now the dream that tiny Cambodia had finally achieved peace lies largely in tatters. It was shattered in a weekend military blitz that revived the agonizingly familiar image of shells and grenades raining down on the capital and refugees streaming from the city.

Hun Sen is now firmly in control after ousting his rival, with his troops embarking on what one Cambodian aid worker called a "reign of terror," summarily executing political opponents. Ranariddh is again consigned to exile, trying to round up diplomatic backing for a comeback. And the Khmer Rouge, thought marginalized and ineffective, is trying to regroup militarily.

What went wrong? The problem was a combination of one increasingly suspicious leader, Hun Sen, unwilling to cede power, and another, Ranariddh, who had grown distant and aloof from his supporters, say diplomats, Cambodians, scholars and other analysts.

There was an international community so eager to declare Cambodia a success that it was willing to overlook clear warning signs that the experiment was going awry.

There was the early failure of the United Nations to compel the factions to disarm.

And there was the factor of the Khmer Rouge, the brutal Communist movement that took over the country in 1975 and, led by the notorious Pol Pot, killed 1 million Cambodians before it was finally ousted by Vietnam, which first installed Hun Sen as leader. The Khmer Rouge never accepted Cambodia's peace process and continued to wage a guerrilla war in remote regions, although in the recent years its strength had declined.

Both Hun Sen and Ranariddh, eager to bolster their military positions before next year's elections, had entered into a race to see who could lure the most fighters from the fragmenting Khmer Rouge.

Hun Sen scored first, when he claimed credit last year for the defection of Ieng Sary, Pol Pot's brother-in-law and a Khmer Rouge "moderate," who brought with him about 2,000 fighters.

This year, Ranariddh entered into intense negotiations to close a deal with Khmer Rouge hard-liners led by Khieu Samphan and Ta Mok — a deal made more possible by the unconfirmed reports last month that Pol Pot had been placed under arrest by the remaining Khmer Rouge, and might even be turned over to an international tribunal to face war crimes charges.

"There was a great competition between Hun Sen and Ranariddh to try to attract [the Khmer Rouge] to their side," a western diplomat said. "They both became convinced that a strong military position was needed to back up their power and to protect themselves."

Hun Sen justified the coup by saying Ranariddh and his top military commander, Gen. Nhek Bun Chhay, were "illegally" infiltrating Khmer Rouge units into Phnom Penh and importing weapons to the city to arm them.

Ranariddh has denied the accusation. But diplomats and U.N. officials said at the weekend that recruiting Khmer Rouge soldiers and bringing at least some of them into Phnom Penh was the key element in Nhek Bun Chhay's strategy for achieving military parity with Hun Sen's army.

Diplomats and longtime Cambodia-watchers in Phnom Penh say the roots of the current crisis lie in the power-sharing agreement between Hun Sen and Ranariddh.

Ranariddh's party, known by the acronym Funcinpec, won the August 1993 elections. However, Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party refused to accept the result and threatened a renewed civil war unless their party was included in a new government.

"What happened during the weekend was the most drastic and most important step in a coup that started in August '93," said a U.N. official with long experience in Cambodia.

Ranariddh endured the power-sharing arrangement, even though Hun Sen and his party kept de facto control of government defense and security apparatus as well as near-total control of the local administration. But in March 1996 Ranariddh announced what amounted to a declaration of independence from Hun Sen and the coalition.

After this month's coup, Hun Sen released a lengthy "white paper" explaining why he resorted to violence. It mentions the March 1996 Funcinpec party congress as "a tragic turning point." The document says Ranariddh used the congress "to attack the entire concept of a coalition government."

Diplomats, Cambodians and other foreign analysts in Phnom Penh said Ranariddh undercut his party support with his autocratic style and ineffectiveness as a political leader.

Disillusionment with Ranariddh apparently is one reason why western diplomats in Cambodia, including those at the U.S. Embassy, did not complain more vocally about Hun Sen's pattern of repression, some analysts say. But U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Quinn also advised Washington to avoid alienating Hun Sen because he was the most powerful politician in Cambodia.

Albright's Emotional Journey

Michael Dobbs in Prague

MADELEINE K. Albright returned to her Prague birthplace for the first time as secretary of state last Sunday, and went straight to the Pinkas Synagogue to look at the inscription of names of Holocaust victims. She was searching for something she had not seen before.

There, on a side wall at the front of the synagogue, just to the left of the Torah, she found the names of her paternal grandparents, Arnost and Olga Korbel. Albright said she learned only this year that those grandparents were Jewish and perished in Nazi death camps.

She had made other visits to the synagogue. "But because I did not know my own family story then, it did not occur to me to look for the name of my grandparents," she said, choking with emotion. "Tonight, I knew to look for those names and their image will forever be seared into my heart."

A two-time refugee, whose diplomat father fled both Nazism and communism, Albright came to the United States in 1948 at the age of 11. Her parents raised her as a Roman Catholic, and never talked about the tragedy that had befallen many of their Jewish relatives in World War II. It was not until earlier this year, after a reporter began researching her family's background, Albright said, that she finally learned what had happened to her relatives.

Last Sunday, as she neared the end of an eight-day tour designed to welcome her native Czech Republic and two other former Soviet bloc countries into NATO, Albright came face to face with her past. "To the many



Madeleine Albright speaking in Prague PHOTOGRAPH: PAVEL HOREJSI

values and many facets that make up who I am, I now add the knowledge that my grandparents and members of my family perished in the worst catastrophe in human history," Albright said. "So I leave here tonight with the certainty that this new part of my identity adds something stronger, sadder and richer to my life."

Before starting talks on Monday with Czech President Vaclav Havel, Albright spent 90 minutes touring Jewish sites in Prague, meeting with Jewish community leaders, and investigating her family's tragic history.

Reporters were not permitted to accompany her on her tour of the synagogue or of the Jewish Town Hall, where she was presented with copies of records showing that Arnost and Olga Korbel were taken to the holding camp at Terezin in 1942. Arnost died of disease in Terezin in September 1942, while Olga was taken to Auschwitz, in Poland, in 1944, on the third-to-last transport before the end of the war.

Albright spent the war years in London with her parents, before returning to Prague in 1945. The family left Czechoslovakia a second time in 1948, following a Communist coup that made it impossible for her father, Josef Korbel, to continue his work as a senior Czech diplomat.

Murderous Cost of Letting The Cat Out of the Bag

OPINION
George F. Will

TODAY'S topic is nature, and what should be done to correct it. Cats, in their unregenerate catness, are behaving badly, so perhaps governments should do something.

Concerning them, the crisis, which is international, is grounded in an intractable fact: They are killers. Feral, meaning homeless or free-roaming cats, kill many millions of birds and mice and other things. But so do domestic cats, if there really are such things. (A cat's domesticity seems to end when its paws touch grass.) Even well-fed cats are predators, apparently for the pure pleasure of the craftsmanship involved.

"The Charge is Murder: But How Guilty is Puss?" asks an eight-column headline in London's Sunday Telegraph. Actually, the newspaper says the charge, leveled by defenders of cats' victims, is "mass slaughter," and cats are abundantly guilty. Britain's 8 million cats — up from 4.5 million in just seven years — are said to kill 210 million birds and wee animals a year, and to maim 42 million more, spending an average of 30 minutes playing with or torturing (depending on whether you side with the cat or the caught) their victims.

Yes, cats are natural-born killers. The wonder is that Caesar and Napoleon disliked them. Cat fanciers say despots prefer dogs because cats, not being docile, cannot be tyrannized. Furthermore, cats are killing machines who once saved civilization by protecting Egypt's granaries from rats. So there.

But that was then. This is now. In Australia, where there are as many cats as Australians (20 million), defenders of our feathered friends are out gunning for feral cats, and in some places the law forbids the acquisition of new cats and requires domestic cats to be kept indoors at night. In America the (supposedly) domestic cat is the most numerous pet (60 million — 30 percent of households have them), and there may be 40 million feral cats. Extrapolation from a study in Wisconsin, where cats are estimated to kill 19 million birds a year, suggests that, nationwide, rural cats kill a billion small mammals and perhaps as many birds a year. And urban cats are busy, too.

Furthermore, cats are not only on the dishing-out end of nature, red in tooth and claw. Feral cats — California has an estimated 3.5 million — often lead lives that spread diseases and are nasty, brutish and short. Groups that have sprung up to care for colonies of feral cats are at daggers drawn with defenders of other wildlife.

Defenders of cats say that domestic cats out for predacious prowls are just doing what comes naturally, and feral cats fill the ecological niche once occupied by forest cats. The cats' critics say cats are dangerously depleting ground-nesting birds and the prey of owls, weasels, foxes and other animals. Furthermore, predators that once might have preyed on cats, such as wolves, are now too few. Critics say there should be leash laws and mandatory vaccination, spaying and neutering.

Look for attempts to break cats to the saddle of society. Around 1950, the Illinois Legislature passed a bill to restrict the freedom of cats. Gov. Adlai Stevenson vetoed it: "The problem of cat vs. bird is as old as time. If we attempt to resolve it by legislation, who knows [but that] we may be called upon to take sides as well in the age-old problems of dog vs. cat, bird vs. bird, or even bird vs. worm. In my opinion, the state of Illinois and its local governing bodies already have enough to do without trying to control feline delinquency."

The pro-bird faction deplores such defeatism. The libertarian cat lobby applauds.

Argentine Teens Desperate to Be Thin

Anthony Faiola in Buenos Aires

IT'S LUNCH time at the overflowing Hospital for Anorexia and Bulimia here, and hundreds of thin teenage girls cluster around rows of makeshift dining tables in the halls of this compound, where scales are forbidden and sizes are torn from all clothing. Drawn faces look up nervously from plates of meat and rice. Patients must eat five times a day, which is not always easy for the new ones, more than 70 of whom arrive each week.

The patients are part of an extraordinary problem in Argentina, where a pathology of thinness is sickening young girls at an alarming rate. The rate of anorexia and bulimia — also known here as fashion model syndrome — is three times higher than in the United States, and possibly the highest in the world, mental health experts say.

Almost one in every 10 Argentine teenage girls suffers from clinical anorexia or bulimia, according to a recent study. Local media call it a problem of "epidemic proportions." Reports of Argentine girls passing out in school from self-starvation are increasing, and the government is considering state-sponsored prevention programs.

Local health experts blame a remarkable obsession with thinness and model culture that far exceeds even the weight-conscious societies in the United States and Europe. Experts also cite a uniquely Argentine struggle with self-image and personal identity; in Buenos Aires, it is said, more people undergo psychoanalysis per capita than anywhere on Earth.

"Our culture is a disaster when it comes to self-image," said Pablo Chapur, a psychologist with the Association Against Bulimia and Anorexia. "In the States, there is a dose of individuality. But here, the pressure to be thin like a model has become overwhelming . . . Look around the streets of Buenos Aires. The women are all sticks."

Since the days before Eva Peron, the much revered one-time first lady, the Argentine woman has prized thinness. In the fashionable shops of Barrio Norte, an upscale district of Buenos Aires, women's clothes tend to be cut one or two sizes smaller than their European or American counterparts, increasing the burden on the local women to maintain a slender figure.

But lately, the thinness culture has intensified. The mass media and advertising booms in Argentina since economic reforms in 1991 have increased the visibility of waif-thin models. A number of Argentine models — including Valeria Mazza and Raquel Mancini — have broken into the international big leagues.

This has taken the fascination girls here have with the world of glamour and modeling to a new level. "You don't find many Argentine girls aspiring to be lawyers or doctors these days," said Javier Luquez, a fashion and entertainment industry agent. "They all want to be models."

Demand for cosmetic surgery is skyrocketing.

Argentina's leading supermodel, Mancini, lapsed into a coma of several days in December after liposuction on her already tiny frame. Last year, Argentine consumers spent $20 million on weight-loss products, according to La Nacion newspaper. In the commercial and middle- and upper-class sectors of Buenos Aires, there are gymnasiums located almost at every fourth block. Slim Centers, the Argentine equivalent of Jenny Craig, are proliferating.

In Buenos Aires, the words for thin and beautiful are used interchangeably.

"A thin woman is just more elegant than a fat woman," said Graciela Naum, a local fashion designer. "A woman who looks thin, who looks good, is more pleasing company, whether for a man or a woman."

The pressure for Maria Belen, 18, became too much after an ex-boyfriend called her "fatso." She recently sat in a corner of a small room at the hospital, fidgeting in a large chair as she talked about wrapping nylon stockings and plastic bags around her body to increase her sweat.

Over the course of a month, she said, she virtually stopped eating. Her cheeks became sunken; bones protruded from her ribs and hips. In two months, black patches began forming under her eyes from malnutrition. She stopped menstruating and cried at the sight of food.

"After three months, people began asking if I had AIDS; I was so glad then," she said. "I thought, that means I'm as thin as a model now. Now I'm beautiful."

Maria Sol, 17, a bulimic from a middle-class Argentine family, was brought to the hospital two years ago after losing almost 30 pounds in three months.

"I didn't fit in the mirror," said Sol, an honor student who had won a scholarship to a top university before her parents checked her into the hospital. "I just needed to be thinner, always. I needed to look like a model."

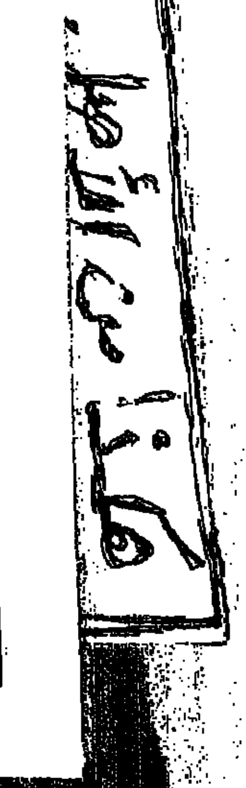
Certainly, individual pathologies can bring on the most severe cases of anorexia and bulimia, said Elisabeth Goode de Garma, 88, considered one of the mothers of Argentine child psychoanalysis. However, she said, the "model culture" plays a significant role.

"Whenever you idolize something, you magnify it," said Ms. Goode de Garma. "We don't want to culturally indentify with the rest of Latin America, so we fixate on some elements of European and U.S. societies — like thinness or fashion — and take them very, very seriously."

Those sentiments seemingly have deep roots here, and the cases of men with eating disorders also are rising markedly.

"I had a sense that unless I was totally thin, my friends would tease me, or I wouldn't get a girlfriend," said Martin, 18, who gave only his first name. Martin was committed to the hospital three months ago when he feared swallowing because he believed "my saliva had too many calories."

"You've got to be thin here," he said. "You've just got to be thin."



Only Half the Story

Milton Viorst

EGYPT'S ROAD TO JERUSALEM
A Diplomat's Story of the Struggle For Peace in the Middle East
By Boutros Boutros-Ghali
Random House. 366pp. $27.50

IT IS STILL not clear why President Clinton and his United Nations ambassador, Madeleine Albright, now the secretary of state, were so determined to dump Boutros Boutros-Ghali as the UN's secretary-general last year. The voters, during the election campaign, had not responded to Bob Dole's use of Boutros as a whipping boy. The best secretary-general of our time, Boutros was headstrong, to be sure. But was that a reason for the White House to bully the UN's majority, at a heavy cost to American prestige, into rejecting him for a second term?

With time on his hands, Boutros has now published a memoir, though not a memoir of his UN years. Based on his diaries, it chronicles his service as Egypt's foreign minister during the seminal era of Middle East peacemaking, from Anwar Sadat's descent on Jerusalem in 1977 to his assassination four years later.

Though Boutros headed the foreign ministry and served as Sadat's right hand during the period, he never actually acquired the minister's title. As a son of the landed aristocracy, he was regarded by some Egyptians as an enemy of the revolution that in 1952 overthrew the old order. Moreover, he was a Christian, married to a Jewish woman, and in a Muslim state these were the wrong credentials for a public champion of peace with the Jews.

Had Boutros been on the reviewing stand with Sadat that day — he begged off, on the grounds of fatigue — the assassins would, he says, probably have gunned him down, too.

Boutros came late to public life. Sadat, having abruptly decided on the Jerusalem trip, needed to replace the foreign minister, who refused to accompany him. Boutros, a professor of international law at Cairo University, shared Sadat's view that it was time to make peace with Israel but not at any price.

Sadat's priority was to regain the Sinai, Egyptian territory lost in the 1967 war. Boutros insisted further that Sadat reject any deal that did not end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and advance Palestinian self-determination. Egypt's preeminence in the Arab world, too important to jeopardize, depended on backing the Palestinians, Boutros said. Sadat concurred, but in practice he proved indifferent to the Palestinian cause.

Frustrated because the Jerusalem visit had not won the Israelis over at once, Sadat grew irritable as talks dragged on. Boutros, as head of Egypt's team, envied his Israeli counterparts, who bargained with calculated objectives, backed by careful studies. Sadat never had a clear strategy, he says, and this forced Egypt's team to shift positions from one day to the next. The Israelis consistently tried to bypass Boutros, recognizing that Sadat was an easier mark. In the end, Sadat's hunger for Sinai exceeded his concern for the Palestinian self-rule, and, to Boutros's chagrin, after Camp David he agreed to a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace.

Boutros argues persuasively that Jordan's King Hussein and the PLO's Yassir Arafat, having been invited to join, made a serious mistake in boycotting the negotiations. Nursing illusions, the Arab community preferred to isolate Sadat, but in doing so they left him a clear field to follow Egypt's national interests. Boutros laments his own failure to rally the Arabs, suggesting that their weight might have transformed the outcome.

Boutros says Sadat explained his attitude as follows: "I do not wish to underestimate the magnitude of the problems and worries that Egyptian diplomacy is facing. But all these worries pale in comparison with the land we have regained. They [the Arabs] are not worth one square meter of this land, which we have regained without spilling the blood of my children . . . I am not afraid of condemnations. I am not afraid of countries severing diplomatic relations with us. And I am not afraid of the provocation and trivia of the Arab countries."

It took the Americans to persuade the Israelis to agree to Palestinian "autonomy" in the West Bank and Gaza, the terms of which Israel promised to negotiate provided the outcome would have no bearing on the treaty with Egypt. To no one's surprise, the negotiations went nowhere, and by 1980 they had petered out. It mattered little to Sadat that peace had a lower priority to Israel's government than realizing the Zionist dream. The Israelis were less interested in settling their differences with the Arab world than obtaining a free hand in all of Palestine. For this, giving up the Sinai was a small price.

The Israelis got what they wanted, but it did not work out as they hoped. The Palestinian issue was not settled. It still smolders, killing Israelis as well as Palestinians nearly every day. Boutros accepts Sadat's decision to take Israel's terms, grating as they were. Had Sadat decided otherwise, the peacemaking effort would have collapsed altogether. Whatever its flaws, the treaty created a "peace process" which has continued despite fits and starts.

Boutros's memoir enriches our record of this very important era in the Middle East. It is, like Boutros himself, lucid, intelligent, self-deprecating and, sometimes, even funny. But we still want to read about Boutros's years at the UN.

The Battleground of the Future

John Prados

GROUND ZERO
The Gender Wars in the Military
By Linda Bird Francke
Simon & Schuster. 304pp. $25

HERE IS a book that could have sprung, full-blown, from today's headlines. Given an evolving scandal in the U.S. Army over the treatment of women recruits at Aberdeen Proving Grounds and elsewhere, along with the Air Force's cashiering of its first woman pilot of a B-52 bomber, and Air Force Gen. Joseph W. Ralston's aborted campaign for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, these issues are white-hot. Now comes Linda Bird Francke with some perspective: cool, perceptive, and well-reasoned in a climate where reason is fast being overtaken by screams. Ground Zero presents a thorough survey of a complex array of issues vital to the transformation of the U.S. military into a post-Cold War and even post-20th-century fighting machine. Along the way, Francke gives us glimpses into the practical difficulties of women trying to navigate the shoals of a military service that continues to be dominated by males. This is a problem whose time has come, not just for women striving for equality but for society as a whole.

The standard refuge of the male elite has been that women are not suited to be warriors, an argument usually accompanied by one or more claims of fact — women are not strong enough, might be loath to kill, could be in danger as prisoners, and so on. Ground Zero shows this kind of rationale at work again and again in the gender war America is cooking up in its own military.

Frequently the claims of fact turn out to be specious or based upon tests rigged against women or which they are prevented from taking. Bogus data are also a culprit. For example, after the Persian Gulf War some in the military chose to emphasize that large numbers of women had not been able to move with their units because they were pregnant. Francke shows how misleading these assertions were, analyzing the statistics for each service. The Army sent home 81 women from the Gulf for "pregnancy associated diagnoses" but evacuated 207 for orthopedic injuries. The Navy had 72 non-deployable pregnant women but sent 2,600 others to the Gulf. (In 1975 the Army lost almost twice as many service hours to men down for drug or alcohol rehab as it did to women for their full terms of pregnancy and post-birth leave.)

The regulations that set definitions for who is "non-deployable" are themselves archaic. After studying the experience of American women prisoners in the Gulf War, Francke writes that fears about women as prisoners are also exaggerated. And insofar as body strength is concerned, well-trained women can do as well as or better than men in many physical tests.

Harassment of women, both serious and petty, extends far beyond the rapes of recruits at Aberdeen. At training schools and in units, women are simultaneously put down and held to a higher standard. These attitudes are both regressive and morally just plain wrong.

Old justifications for excluding women no longer hold water. The idea of using high-technology weapons to dominate across the spectrum of conflict, means a trend toward engaging at a distance. "Smart Weapons" in standoff battles in turn mean less reliance upon male upper-body strength. Even more telling, complex weapons require complicated maintenance, and Francke shows that women have been scoring higher than male recruits on armed forces achievement tests. Just to accent the reality, more women are being born than men, so that over the long term it is going to become increasingly difficult to people the armed forces with males at past rates. Revamping the system is not only the right thing; it is a necessity.

Francke usefully identifies the points at which the system needs to change. These include giving real clout to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, revisiting the question of women in combat, rationalizing operational routines and medical arrangements to accommodate women's health issues, improving conditions for military families, terminating the male culture of harassment, and so on. Although conditions have to change, this is a tall order. Francke, for one, is not optimistic, concluding that "the resistance to women will not go away because it can't." Read Ground Zero to learn why.

Naughty and Not Very Nice

Bruce Cook

THE LAST PARTY: Scenes from My Life With Norman Mailer
By Adele Mailer
Barricade. 380pp. $25

IT'S DIFFICULT to know quite how to approach a book like this. When an ex-wife, ex-mistress, sometimes even a widow, writes a book about her former partner, it is often done to give vent to stored anger. Occasionally, however, there are surprises. When Joyce Johnson, an ex-girlfriend of Jack Kerouac, published Minor Characters, we got a beautifully written piece of work that is wonderfully evocative of Kerouac and the entire period.

The Last Party does not begin to approach the standard set by Minor Characters. Adele's years with Mailer from 1951 to 1962 were tough ones for him, professionally. When they met he was coming off his failed first marriage, yet still riding high on the huge success of his first novel, The Naked And The Dead. His second novel, Barbary Shore, was trounced by the critics when it came out in 1952. His third, The Deer Park, was rejected when Mailer refused to rewrite or remove a passage deemed pornographic; when at last it was brought out by a more daring publisher in 1955, it received more bad reviews than good. He would not attempt another full-length work of fiction for 10 years. How did Mailer, the man, hold up during these difficulties?

Right from the beginning, according to Adele Mailer, he wanted, then needed, to be the center of attention, admired for his talent and boldness. That meant an endless routine of party-going and party-giving, which in turn meant lots of drinking and lots of pot-smoking, too. Back in the '50s, Norman and Adele Mailer were out there on the very cutting edge of being naughty. They stripped at parties, tried wife-swapping and even paid to be entertained with a sex exhibition down in Mexico.

She seems to have matched him drink for drink and toke for toke. Naughtiness turned nasty. Mailer became famously and openly unfaithful. His truculence escalated sharply to combativeness. When Adele was pregnant with their second child, he hit her in the stomach. At the end of one of their parties Mailer stabbed her twice with a three-inch penknife. She was on the critical list three weeks; he was taken to Bellevue and diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic; she refused to keep him there or to press charges. And that, except for a few brief months when she returned to him, was the end of their marriage.

Although I accept Adele Mailer's account of their life together as accurate, something needs to be said at this point. No matter how drunk the night before, Mailer always went off the next morning to work. He recreated himself brilliantly as the essayist and journalist of the '60s and '70s. Does this excuse his behavior toward his wife and others? No, it does not. But it should remind us that the only true way to judge a writer is by his work, not by his private life.

Jobs for the boys, but not jobs for all

John Grieve Smith finds flaws in Labour's Welfare to Work scheme

THE Welfare to Work proposals announced by the UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, in his first Budget have diverted attention from the implications of his wider financial policies, which are likely to be more important in determining the level of unemployment, and are in danger of pulling in the opposite direction. Is the Labour government really putting employment at the top of the agenda?

Despite their criticism of Tory policies, Tony Blair and Mr Brown made it clear before the election there would be no fundamental change in approach to macroeconomic policy. In his 1995 Mais Lecture, Mr Blair said that he believed there was now a new consensus on economic policy, replacing the Keynesian full-employment consensus of the post-war period; and Mr Brown vowed to follow as strict, or stricter, financial policies than the Tories, with a lower or more effective inflation target when he became Chancellor.

They successfully convinced the City and business of their whole-hearted conversion to the prevailing economic orthodoxy, which relies on maintaining a certain minimum level of unemployment to contain inflation. But when addressing a wider public, New Labour made much of its determination to tackle youth and long-term unemployment — although carefully dropping any reference to "full employment".

The Government's actions since taking office have been broadly in line with the small print in Labour's pre-election prospectus. But are they in tune with the expectations of those who supported Labour in the belief that unemployment would come down and the excesses of the Thatcher era be removed?

Here we come to the fundamental contradiction at the heart of the Government's economic policies. Its emphasis on strict macroeconomic policies is totally at odds with its rhetoric about jobs, and this two-faced policy is likely, sooner or later, to have serious political consequences.

The Chancellor says that "everyone in need of work should have the opportunity to work", but the explicit assumption about the control of inflation in the Financial Statement is that unemployment should not be allowed to fall below something like its present level for fear of the economy "overheating".

The proposed temporary subsidies to employers to take on the young or long-term unemployed seem unlikely to have much effect in increasing total employment.

The demand for labour depends primarily on the level of demand for goods and services, and the instruments for affecting this are monetary and fiscal policy. The Chancellor is, however, intent on giving macroeconomic policy a less expansionary stance than his predecessor: first by giving the Bank of England its independence to set interest rates and hence abdicating from any influence over exchange rates; then by setting tighter targets for the public sector borrowing requirement.

The fiscal tightening in the Budget may not be as deflationary as it might appear, because the windfall tax and the abolition of dividend tax credits will not have much immediate impact on demand.

But the Financial Statement indicates that even the Treasury's most optimistic medium-term forecast assumes that the only reduction in unemployment in the next few years will be a small fall in the number of long-term unemployed to the 1990 level.

Financial commentators have criticised the Chancellor for not curbing consumption this year, but such tactical comments are pre-empting any discussion of the more fundamental strategic issues about reducing unemployment. Many people must have been taken aback to find the Prime Minister lecturing Britain's EU partners about the merits of "flexible" labour markets in the UK and the United States.

Flexibility of the right kind can be a good thing: for example, adjusting hours of work to meet employees' family commitments as well as fluctuations in business. But with the present weak demand for labour, "flexibility" has become merely a euphemism for employers enforcing insecure conditions and poor pay on their workers. This is particularly bad in some service trades, which are advertising jobs at $3 to $4.50 an hour.

The danger that unemployment will show little or no improvement is the most worrying sign that the Government's achievement will be to consolidate the Thatcherite social revolution rather than reverse it. The major cause of the increase in inequality under the Thatcher regime was the abandonment of full employment and consequent weakening of the power of the trade unions and employees to secure good pay and conditions for those at the bottom of the jobs ladder.

The one essential condition for rebuilding a fairer society is a stronger demand for labour. But to live with a stronger demand for labour without renewed inflation, the Government must tackle two problems.

The first is the danger of excessive wage increases. To avoid that, the Government must be prepared to seek an agreement with unions and employers to limit pay increases, rather than relying on continued heavy unemployment. They should do so now, before any acceleration of wage or price increases makes it more difficult.

It would seem natural for New Labour to follow such a co-operative approach to policy-making, involving both unions and employers as social partners in a new policy-making forum, but at the moment, the Government appears to be falling over backwards not to have anything to do with trade unions.

The second problem is to rebuild Britain's industrial capacity. The Budget's emphasis on investment incentives is a step in the right direction. But the need is to invest in additional capacity. Firms will do this only if they are confident that the Government has an effective strategy for reducing unemployment without a rise in inflation.

The Budget confirms that the Government has no such strategy. Indeed, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that either ministers do not understand the implications of the Chancellor's macroeconomic policy stance or they are guilty of hypocrisy when talking about putting employment at the top of the agenda.

John Grieve Smith is an economist at Robinson College, Cambridge, and author of Full Employment: A Pledge Betrayed

Germany to sell oil stocks to qualify for euro

Denis Staunton in Berlin

THE German finance minister, Theo Waigel, unveiled an emergency budget last week in a last-ditch attempt to qualify for the proposed single European currency. Germany will sell off all its oil reserves by 1999, starting in a few weeks with the sale of 2.8 million barrels of crude.

The government had to put together an emergency budget for 1997 because it miscalculated its spending forecasts last year and now has to borrow more to pay for record unemployment and to make up for lower tax revenues.

Overall spending will rise to 458.6 billion deutschmarks ($260 billion) this year, and new borrowing will surge by almost DM18 billion to DM71.2 billion.

Mr Waigel insists that the new measures, which include more privatisation as well as public spending cuts, mean Germany will qualify for the euro with a budget deficit of exactly 3 per cent of gross domestic product.

But Professor Norbert Walther, chief economist at Deutsche Bank, suggested that Mr Waigel's calculations were based on too rosy a view of Germany's economic prospects. "The numbers may be a bit optimistic. It's possible that the government is right, but they will need a lot of luck, and I wouldn't count on luck if I were [Chancellor Helmut] Kohl or Waigel," Prof Walther said.

Along with the revised spending plans for this year, the cabinet approved a draft budget for 1998 which foresees a fall in the deficit to about DM58 billion.

Despite the spending squeeze, Mr Waigel found an extra DM850 million in next year's budget to ensure that Germany will be able to place its order for 180 Eurofighter aircraft, safeguarding thousands of jobs in Britain and Germany.

The plan to sell off Germany's oil reserves, which is expected to bring in DM1.4 billion, follows Mr Waigel's failed scheme to raise money by revaluing Germany's gold reserves. This was thwarted by opposition from the Bundesbank, Germany's central bank, which forced the government into a humiliating climbdown and damaged Germany's reputation for financial probity.

The new spending plans come against the background of an increasingly strident debate in Germany about the future of the euro. A growing chorus of voices, led by the conservative prime minister of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber, is calling for the project to be postponed unless Germany and France both meet the strictest interpretation of the Maastricht criteria.

Chancellor Kohl, who refuses to countenance a postponement, was forced this month to repeat his government's commitment to reach the 3 per cent budget deficit target.

"If Germany's deficit is close to 3.5 per cent and France is above 3.5 per cent, that could force a delay," Prof Walther said. "But I don't believe an orderly delay is possible. Any delay [of the euro] would lead to a derailment for 10 years."

In Brief

THE pound broke through the DM3 barrier to touch its highest level in seven years. The surge did little to allay speculation that UK interest rates, raised again by a quarter of a point, will continue to rise.

THE planned $20 billion global alliance between British Telecom and MCI was under threat after the US firm issued a shock profits warning. Shareholders wiped $4 billion off BT's share value on the news.

GEC plans to create a world-leading defence electronics company which could merge with British Aerospace. George Simpson, GEC's new managing director, said he was ready to splash out more than $3 billion to launch such a venture.

EUROTUNNEL was saved from bankruptcy when shareholders voted to support a $12 billion debt restructuring deal that gives half the company to its leading bank lenders.

THREE senior executives resigned from Hambros after the blue-chip bank's lawyers criticised their behaviour in the abortive $2 billion takeover bid for the Co-op earlier this year.

THE UK government turned up the heat on City firms involved in the $7 billion pensions mis-selling scandal by publishing a "league of shame" detailing the records of the worst offenders. Only two of the 24 companies listed have settled more than 10 per cent of their cases.

APPLE Computer's chairman and chief executive, Gilbert Amelio, resigned, casting fresh doubt over the survival of the US pioneer of the personal computer. Meanwhile Microsoft, its dominant rival, was expected to announce a large rise in profits.

MORE THAN $170 million was wiped off the the value of British Biotechnology after the drugs firm reported a loss of $50 million. The company has not made a profit in its 11 years.

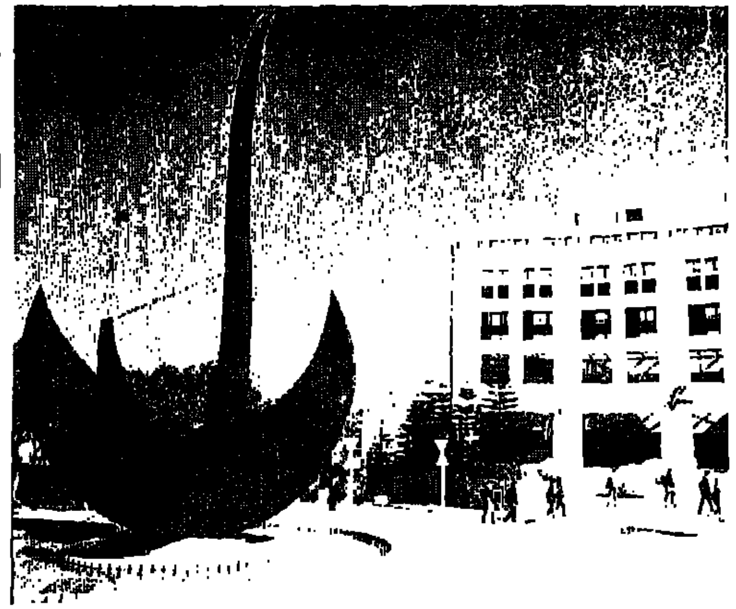
FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates July 14	Sterling rates July 7
Australia	2.2896-2.2924	2.2652-2.2678
Austria	21.26-21.28	20.67-20.69
Belgium	62.38-62.48	60.61-60.66
Canada	2.3089-2.311	2.3149-2.3169
Denmark	11.50-11.51	11.18-11.19
France	10.20-10.21	9.90-9.91
Germany	3.0216-3.0253	2.9381-2.9405
Hong Kong	13.07-13.08	13.03-13.04
Ireland	1.1177-1.1200	1.1029-1.1071
Italy	2,935-2,939	2,863-2,868
Japan	191.98-192.18	189.20-189.41
Netherlands	3.4023-3.4053	3.3068-3.3093
New Zealand	2.5358-2.5390	2.4951-2.4989
Norway	12.60-12.62	12.27-12.29
Portugal	304.83-305.18	296.38-296.59
Spain	254.50-254.70	248.00-248.35
Sweden	13.16-13.17	12.98-13.00
Switzerland	2.4878-2.4906	2.4519-2.4547
USA	1.6878-1.6808	1.6842-1.6860
ECU	1.5303-1.5325	1.4931-1.4945

FTSE 100 Share Index up 40.7 at 4667.4. FTSE 250 Index down 5.0 at 4423.9. Gold down $2.75 at $321.75.

Educated guess on Hong Kong's future

A strong educational base has played a key role in the ex-colony's success. Can it survive the handover, asks **Stewart Sutherland**



Hong Kong's University of Science and Technology, which has seen dramatic growth in funds and student numbers MCMILLAN/LAISON

ON *JULY* 1, it all changed — or so went the accepted perception in the West. In Hong Kong there is less certainty, not because anyone knows better, but because there is, as always, a degree of inscrutability in the intentions of the Chinese government.

It is important for the people of Hong Kong to hope that "one country, two systems" has substance rather than rhetoric as its mark. Are they wise to do so?

The uncertainties concern the possible changes and continuities in Chinese policy and leadership. For many this resolves itself into the question of whether Tiananmen Square was a reassertion of basic government attitudes or a deep but lone crater on the path towards political and economic liberalism.

I remember sitting in a train in China two months before June 4, 1989, watching fellow passengers listen with increasing amazement to the broadcast of a press conference by senior Communist Party officials. It was not what was said that caused the stir, but simply the fact that aggressive Western journalists were there to ask these questions in the first place. Which was the aberration — the first such press conference following the quadrennial party jamboree, or the killings of June 4?

Friends in Hong Kong divide three ways on this. There is a large group who simply keep their heads down and walk forward, hoping for the best, but believing that the matter is out of their hands. A second group are vociferous about threats to civil liberties and political freedom. A third group believe in the power of the Hong Kong economy to be the ultimate protection of "one country, two systems".

My own view is that it is the interaction of the two issues of the economy and civil liberties that will prescribe the future for the universities of Hong Kong and its people.

Hong Kong's universities have seen a period of dramatic growth while experiencing otherwise a time of comparative stability. The economy is forecast to grow by 5.5 per cent in 1997 and this is not out of line with fairly consistent recent performance. In 1989, the Legislative Council decided to expand the equivalent of the University Age Participation Rate from 12.9 per cent to 18 per cent in the period to 1994-95. This target was reached and exceeded. During that time, unlike the UK, a University Grants Committee buffer system was and has been retained, a triennial planning and budgeting cycle still exists and, even more remarkably, unit costs were allowed to rise by 24 per cent. The Hong Kong government and people wanted expansion and were prepared to pay for it.

They were able to pay because of the extraordinary resilience of the economy. They wanted to expand the system because they unhesitatingly connected economic success with a stronger education base. This is now washing through into their attitude to the school system.

The question is whether the Chinese government will be prepared to accept that a successful economy does require a rather different "system" for the Special Administrative Region — and, if so, how different. It is not enough to argue that they already know this, because of the conditions for growth that they have had to create in the development regions of the east coast.

The growth in the Hong Kong economy recently, and even more so in the future, as has been argued in a study by a team from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is the growth of an intensively knowledge-based economy. Their study is symbolically titled "Made by Hong Kong" rather than "Made in Hong Kong", and that is the current reality.

The conclusions of the study will repay close attention by Hong Kong's new leader, Tung Chee-hwa, and those to whom he answers in Beijing. In addition to stressing the need for a highly educated population, they emphasise the need for social stability, for stability of institutions that guarantee a degree of public integrity, for a mobile workforce that will enter and leave Hong Kong freely, and for the democratisation process to continue.

They stress the need to bolster Hong Kong's reputation for compliance with quality controls in business, and for a climate in which local and overseas investors are persuaded that current protection for intellectual property rights will be maintained.

SUCH PATTERNS of civil society do not flourish in regimes that are repressive and secretive, and therefore highly vulnerable to corruption. There is a connection between the flourishing of the type of economy that Hong Kong now is and the freedoms of a society that has public checks and balances of the type most obviously practised by a free and responsible press. This is consonant with the conditions that enable universities to flourish.

The delicate balance that must be struck in Hong Kong will be between a proper understanding by Chinese authorities in Beijing of where their own long-term interests lie, and the desire some may feel to test to breaking point the proper wish to enter the 21st century in possession of political and civil liberty.

The natural pragmatism of Chinese culture, evidently present in Mr Tung's style, will be tested to the full in the years to come.

Professor Sir Stewart Sutherland is Principal of Edinburgh University and a member of Hong Kong's University Grants Committee











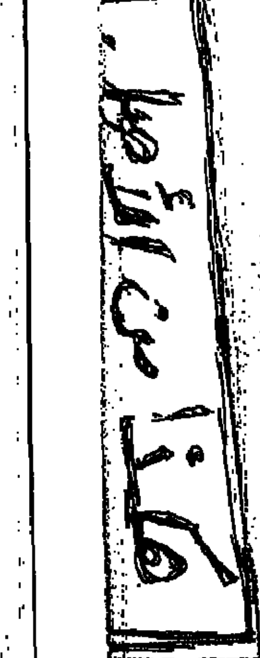


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The **Guardian Weekly**













Homo erectus family reconstructed from remains found in Africa NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

We're all African, no bones about it

Humans are not related to Neanderthals but share a common African ancestor, writes **Chris Mihill**

DRAMATIC new evidence published last week has helped resolve one of the hottest issues in human evolution: confirmation that modern humans are almost certainly descendants of a common African ancestor and are not related to Neanderthals.

The debate has split scientists into fiercely opposed camps. One group has for years claimed that modern humans contain Neanderthal genes. Another has maintained that the first Europeans were an evolutionary cul-de-sac.

But new DNA tests on the original Neanderthal man, found in the Neander Valley near Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1856, have revealed genetic variations so great there could not have been a common ancestry.

The tests were carried out by Svante Pääbo together with Matthias Krings and colleagues, of the Zoological Institute at Munich university. It is the first time DNA has been recovered from the bones of an extinct human species.

The Neanderthal probably died 30,000 years ago, although the bones could be 100,000 years old.

Professor Chris Stringer, of the Natural History Museum, London, who has been pursuing parallel research for the past 10 years, called the German work a major scientific breakthrough.

"It is a fantastic achievement — no other team has been able to get DNA from Neanderthal remains. This is the equivalent of landing Pathfinder on Mars. It is every bit as scientifically important."

The Munich team took a DNA sequence from 0.4g of Neanderthal bone and compared it with human and chimpanzee DNA. The findings are published in the scientific journal Cell.

Professor Pääbo told a press conference in London that the differences along one length of DNA between various humans was eight mutations — but the same length of Neanderthal DNA varied at 27 positions. This four-fold difference was so wide it proved humans had not descended from Neanderthals.

The finding gives weight to a theory known as "out of Africa" which holds that *Homo sapiens* evolved from a common ancestor in Africa about 200,000 years ago.

Professor Pääbo said: "This is the first genetic information we have from an extinct species and it indicates that Neanderthals had nothing to do with our history. We are all Africans in disguise."

Professor Stringer said the DNA work was the first evidence of a divergence between humans and Neanderthals which was not based on fossil interpretation. "Neanderthals are distinct and are not our ancestors," he said.

He added: "I think we are all children of Africa. We do need more data, but I think the evidence is that our species had its beginnings in Africa. An African Eve 200,000 years ago could be the ancestor of us all."

Professor Stringer said about 40,000 years ago it was likely Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* overlapped and may have co-existed for some 10,000 years before the Neanderthals became extinct 30,000 years ago, although it was unlikely there had been inter-breeding, because of the DNA differences.

Dr Tomas Lindahl, of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, who is a world expert on DNA degradation, said analysis of Neanderthal bones was at the absolute limits of present technology because DNA decayed and disappeared over time due to the action of oxygen and water.

"The present recovery of Neanderthal DNA represents a landmark discovery, which is arguably the greatest achievement so far in the field of ancient DNA research. It is a real tour de force, and the most important work yet done on DNA," said Dr Lindahl.

THE GERMAN researchers may have been inadvertently helped by Victorian curators who had a habit of varnishing bones. The Neanderthal skeleton, out of the ground for 140 years, had been varnished twice, which may have stopped further DNA decay.

"Varnishing bones is a practice we now frown on, but in this case it may have been the best thing that could have happened," said Professor Stringer.

Tim Radford adds: For a while, during the last 100,000 years, Neanderthal man had Europe to himself.

Homo neanderthalis was himself a descendant of *Homo heidelbergensis*, the species that camped and fed and made axes and slaughtered rhino at Boxgrove in Surrey.

He was huge and hulking, adapted to survive the cold, and he had a vast nose, massive eyebrow ridges and a huge braincase. But he was not a brute. He had a culture. He looked after his sick, and buried his dead.

Nobody knows what happened to Neanderthal man. Current thinking is that a new human group arose in Africa, mankind's home continent, 150,000 or more years ago: slimmer, more graceful, more resourceful. These people had some distinct advantage. The bet is that it was a complex language. Sooner or later they too began to move.

Nobody knows when *Homo sapiens* entered Europe, but it is believed that *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthal man shared the continent for tens of thousands of years.

About 30,000 years ago, however, Neanderthal man disappeared from the fossil record. Nobody knows why this happened.

One school has argued for years that Neanderthal man and *Homo sapiens* interbred, and that modern humans descend from both. The new evidence is against this, but it is unlikely to end the debate.



The King's Holly beats the previous record by 30,000 years

Holly bush sheds shyness 43,000 years on

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

THE oldest living plant in the world — a self-propagating Tasmanian holly-like bush — was last week estimated by scientists to have been growing for more than 43,000 years.

A cloned cutting of the specimen, discovered on the Apple Island in the 1930s, has lived unnoticed for years in a pot at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Hobart.

The chief botanist at the Tasmanian parks and wildlife service, Stephen Harris, revealed that *Lomatia tasmanica*, whose common name is King's Holly, was 30,000 years older than the previous contender for the title, an American huckleberry.

The plant was discovered in a fragment of rain forest in Tasmania's wild southwest more than 50 years ago, though its great age was not initially suspected.

The find is one of the most exciting since the huge Wollemi Pine, thought to be extinct, was found in canyons near Sydney in 1995.

The bush, which has glossy, pointed leaves and resembles holly, does not produce seeds but sheds "cuttings", which grow into clones.

The plant appears to consist of hundreds of individual shrubs — genetically the same plant.

"When people think of a 43,000-year-old plant they probably visualise something gnarled and twisted; this just looks like an undershrub in the forest," said Dr Harris.

The plant's age was established by comparing it with identical fossilised remains on the forest floor which had been carbon-dated as 43,000 years old. There are plans to reproduce the bushes for sale to gardeners around the world.

But the priority is for botanists from the parks and wildlife service and Tasmania university to conserve the plant's environment. "We've got to be careful we don't expose it to disease," said Dr Harris.



Mary Riddell meets Britain's new Foreign Secretary

Cook turns up heat in the FO kitchen

ROUGHLY one and a half hours behind schedule, a plate of sweet and sour pork appears round the corner of the Foreign Office canteen, with Robin Cook in close pursuit. The morning Cabinet meeting has run on. Cook is low on sustenance and short on time. So perhaps we could start now, he suggests, piling into pork and rice (plum crumble and congealed custard to follow).

Not that speaking while munching is a problem for Cook. "The Europeans have this rather touching faith that if the most difficult issues are debated over food, you're more likely to get an outcome." Tony Blair and Cook returned from the Maastricht treaty renegotiations in Amsterdam full of what had been achieved on defence, border controls and quota-hopping. On to the G8 meeting in Denver, where (presumably over a hog roast) Cook got tough with the Americans about global warming. And then to the Earth Summit in New York (rib-eye steaks and apocalyptic warnings of future drought wars being fought over water supplies). Then to Hong Kong, to apply pressure on European partners to safeguard human rights.

How is Cook surviving the fearsome schedule? "It certainly beats the hell out of being in opposition. One finds the most satisfaction from the fact that one can actually change things." Changes so far include land-mines banned: unions back at GCHQ: the promise of a more open Foreign Office focus on human rights, green issues and commercial advantage for British companies overseas.

But how has power changed Cook? He has moved from a basement flat in Notting Hill to the palatial Nash Terrace once occupied by Prince Louis Napoleon with state rooms that have recently been refurbished at a cost of £1.5 million.

"I don't particularly like the flat. A great big bloody mausoleum. It's very gloomy. When I go out of my bedroom in the morning there's a picture of three rather sad peasants in a cart on the river, looking at the sky and mouthing: 'It's going to rain.' I feel like rushing back in for my raincoat. The most cheerful painting in the place is the one that greets you when you come in the front door — the murder scene from Hamlet. Plus, the lights are very dim."

Given all this why didn't he decline it? "There are practical problems. It's much more secure, and there are regular trundles to and fro with red boxes."

Then there is Chevening, the Foreign Secretary's neo-classical country residence, set in 3,500 Sussex acres. Did Cook, who has not yet been there, consider turning down this perk? "It's in trust — not mine to give away, unfortunately. I didn't take this job for the trappings. The main difference in lifestyle is that your time is measured and parcelled out in 15-minute intervals from 7am till midnight. I said recently to my PPS that I wasn't sure whether I had the Rolls-Royce of support staff or whether I'd been kidnapped and taken into custody."

As cells go, Cook's office is on the ample side. He has added only two personal touches. One is the stuffed stoat given to him to mark his success at sinking his teeth into the previous government. The second is a bust of Ernest Bevin, his post-war predecessor, which Cook found collecting dust behind an aspidistra in his flat.

It was Bevin who, on finding five red boxes left by civil servants with a memo suggesting he might like to read them over the weekend, left his own footnote on the untouched pile: "A kind thought but, sadly, erroneous."

Cook, though not so cavalier, has also fended off excess paperwork. "My job is to be chairman of the company rather than plant manager." Now, the first round of summits accomplished, he plans a major shake-up for Foreign Office plc. Though tactful in his approach, he does not dispute the notion that many of Britain's embassies and consulates are run by those whose grand lifestyle is not matched by commercial acumen.

Does he plan to follow Tony Blair's lead of giving business moguls a key role? "Yes. We're looking at plans to increase exchanges between the business community and diplomatic circles. David Simon [the former BP head and a key government adviser] and I hope to make an announcement on that in the next month.

"The Foreign Office has a unique network of outlets across the world — 220 posts. We want all of them, particularly in key markets, to play their part in boosting British trade."

So top diplomats can all consider themselves under review? "I think that to breed insecurity across the service would be counter-productive. But you can readily identify a number of countries, in Latin America for instance, with growing economies and opportunities for British business."

Back home, other eruptions are planned. "I want to tackle the image of the Foreign Office as stuffy, overdignified and élitist. I'm throwing it open for a day to let the public in. We're inviting careers officers in. I'm concerned about the lack of ethnic minorities. If we speak for modern Britain, we should represent all of it."



On top of the world . . . Robin Cook wants to make the Foreign Office more commercially-minded PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

This sounds just fine, but critics have been quick to quibble over potential gaps between presentation and substance. There have been rumblings about just what has happened since Cook promised to ban arms exports to repressive regimes. How far has he got?

"Quite a long way. Our review of the criteria for arms export licences will be finished this month. We're one of the four main arms exporters and that isn't going to change. But we shan't be giving any future licences for exporting arms that could be used for internal repression."

Land-mines, of course, are already outlawed. Princess Diana has been in his office to discuss her favourite campaign. Insiders say it was most jolly and the Princess (since pilloried in the press for "meddling" in politics) and Clare Short, the minister for international development, got quite sisterly.

As in the run-up to the election, he is careful not to set himself at variance with any aspect of government spending plans. But something in Cook's perception has changed. He has never ruled himself out as a future chancellor — the job he is said to aspire to most — or a future leader.

ASK him now, however, if his own portfolio seems a little, well, backroom, with Blair doing all the front-of-house summitry, and his denial is laced with new admiration. "No, no, no. My job is tough, the Prime Minister's is ten times worse." Right now, he says he feels like someone climbing the Himalayas. Fatal to look ahead and see how much there is to do.

Inevitably, he has seen less of his wife, a consultant haematologist. He has not ridden a horse — his favourite pastime — since the election but continues to co-write, with his son, his weekly racing column in the Glasgow Herald.

"This is not a normal existence though. I wouldn't deny that there isn't a serious problem in not being able to find any private space to recharge your psychological batteries."

On the contrary, refuelling has come to mean nothing more cerebral than a five-minute pitstop in the office canteen. But that in itself might be a useful gesture in the new politics of openness and informality. Staff at the Foreign Office used to be perplexed at spotting the boss in the queue for pork and plum crumble. These days, they just carry on munching.

Agribusiness uncowed by animal suffering

George Monbiot finds that all is not well on the modern British farm

THE RESEARCHERS who astonished us by unveiling Dolly the sheep have just announced yet another remarkable conjuring trick. Using genetic engineering, they will, they claim, be able to breed cows which secrete blood products into their milk.

Human blood components in cows' milk is revolutionary. Had they announced, on the other hand, that the cows were secreting their own blood products, no one who has had any contact with the dairy industry would have turned a hair. The Ministry of Agriculture permits what it calls a "somatic cell count" of 400,000 per millilitre of milk. This has yet to be reliably translated into volumes, but a rough estimate suggests that possibly 1 per cent, maybe more, of a legal pint of milk is not milk, but a "suspension of somatic cells", known to the lay public as pus.

Even the most determined meat-eater could scarcely remain oblivious to the horrors of intensive pig and chicken farming in Britain, but dairy cattle tend to be presented as the most fortunate of farm animals, left to graze blithely in the fields, slaughtered only when they become too old. Nothing could be further from the truth. The dairy farm is now the scene of the most monstrous of all the routine abominations perpetrated by modern intensive agriculture.

Blood and pus are significant components of the milk we in Britain drink because mastitis (a cripplingly painful inflammation of the udder) is rampaging through the dairy herd: between 30 and 35 cases per hundred cows are recorded every year. About 30 per cent of the dairy cows in Britain are lame, partly as a result of laminitis. This would feel — according to a leading cattle vet — like "crushing all your fingernails in the door then standing on your fingertips". Agony is the resting state of the modern dairy cow.

Both mastitis and laminitis result from the extraordinary stresses placed on the cow by the pursuit of ever higher milk production. The modern milker's enormous udders are frequently crushed when the cows lie down; are damaged by milking machines; or are exposed to infection when the animals are processed too quickly. Udders now get so big that they push the cows' hind legs outwards, straining the outside of the foot. The damage is exacerbated by acidosis, caused by too much milk-stimulating food. As a result of these and other torments, most dairy cows have to be culled at five or six years of age — about one-fifth of their natural life span.

Antibiotic use is irresponsible even by agricultural standards: the biochemist Dr Alan Long reports that antibiotics are now being substituted on some farms for antiseptic, massively increasing the chances that dangerous bacteria will become resistant to drugs.

All this is necessary, milk producers tell us, because they have to raise production levels in order to become more competitive. Yet Britain suffers from an over-production crisis so severe that the European Union has established a quota system, limiting the amount of milk each farmer is allowed to produce. So instead of increasing overall production, dairy farmers are now seeking to boost their voluptuous profits by reducing the number of cows required to meet their quota. The latest monstrous object of desire is the "10-tonne" cow — an animal which can produce 10 tonnes of milk a year, or 80 litres every milking day, almost twice the current average yield.

British farmers might soon be able to do still better. Bovine somatotropin (BST), an artificial hormone which stimulates milk production, has been banned by the EU. Acting on behalf of Monsanto, the manufacturer, the United States has asked the World Trade Organisation to rule that the ban is an unfair barrier to trade. Monsanto managed, at first, to disguise the results of the clinical trials it commissioned, but when independent researchers succeeded in getting hold of its data, they found that BST increases the rate of udder cell infection by 20 per cent. Insulin Growth Factor in the milk of hormone-treated cows may also affect human health.

In the wake of the BSE crisis, the intensive-livestock industry shows little sign of responding to concern about animal welfare: it leaves consumers with no choice but to avoid buying its products.

Letter from Mozambique Joanna Smith

Leftover morsels

HOW can a zoo keep going in the poorest country on earth? I pay 1,000 Meticals (about 7 cents) for my zoo ticket and enter the shade of old acacia and frangipani trees, full of blossom and birdsong. The cages and enclosures are built in the same style as much of Maputo: streamline curves of concrete in faded lido colours. Today many of them are empty. During the war, which ended in 1992, people would flee from the suburbs and lock themselves into the empty cages for a safe night's sleep.

The first creatures I come across are yellow chicks and baby guinea pigs crammed together in a small pen. But when I look through the unravelling wire of the next cage, expecting to see rabbits or hamsters, I recoil rapidly. The chicken wire suddenly seems hopelessly flimsy. I ask a woman sweeping up the frangipani what the python gets to eat. She points to the guinea pigs and chicks. This is the first zoo I've visited that demonstrates the workings of the food chain.

I join some children who are gazing at a leathery island in the middle of a murky pond. A sign tells us not to excite the animals and I'm curious to know what we're not supposed to excite. After a while a dripping hippo head appears, its huge pink mouth open to reveal the remains of a grassy breakfast. The children toss in a couple of banana skins and a Coke can that singularly fail to excite the hippo.

I move on to a jolly, pink-painted water garden, home to some mean-looking crocodiles. They are lying with their mouths open, probably hoping that some small child will fall in. I keep my distance from the low, well-chewed fence: one of these creatures escaped last year and scuttled out of the gates, down the main road and into a ditch where it was shot by a passing policeman.

There are very few picturebook African animals in this African zoo: no giraffes, zebras, rhinos or elephants. Ten years ago they were all here — flaking murals of them in top hats and tutus can still be seen on the cage walls. But like many people in Maputo, they died of hunger or lack of medicines during the 16-year-long civil war. There aren't many large animals in the wild either: most of them were eaten or sold to buy arms.

After rows of happy little monkeys and doomed chickens it's a surprise to see a pair of slightly threadbare lions sitting in Trafalgar Square poses. These lions had a long and undignified period of vegetarianism during the war: they would run to the bars to lick up scraps of bread that visitors threw to them. Their diet would occasionally be relieved when one of the horses in the neighbouring ex-colonial riding stables died. These days, however, meat is supplied by Maputo's five-star hotel, the Polana. Many of the zoo's animals are fed on Polana leftovers. The hotel appears to have a low leftover threshold: some turtles seem to be feasting on grilled king prawns.

I come across a solitary balding gorilla in a Victorian madhouse of a cage: a brown concrete space with arched windows and thick vertical bars. The sign says it isn't necessary to feed the gorilla as he's been adopted by the Polana. I watch him for 10 minutes neatly folding a crisp packet, pushing it into a plastic bottle, pulling it out and folding it up again. It's a relief when breakfast is served: a heap of freshly squeezed orange peel, buttered toast, shiny apples, avocadoes and crusty bread rolls. It is a meal that many in Mozambique would be willing to fight him for. If I were one of the zoo workers earning the minimum salary of $17 a month, the gorilla might have to be content with the orange peel. Or maybe I would apply for adoption by the Polana.

Fame from outer space

Ed Vulliamy in Roswell

"*JUST* write 'one' where it asks how many in your party," beamed Ruth Moeller at the registration desk of the International UFO Museum Research Centre. "Unless of course there's someone with you that I can't see."

There was nothing illogical about such a remark in Roswell, New Mexico. Earlier this month the streets of this scrappy town on a high, arid desert plain were filled with processions of silver beings waving spidery fingers at passers-by clad in "I was abducted" T-shirts. Motels promised "earthlings welcome". The packed car parks still had room for "UFO parking".

Roswell is the high temple of the swelling number of UFO freaks in the United States and worldwide. Some 50,000 people attended the exhaustive week-long UFO Encounter 97 Festival, staged to mark the anniversary of what happened here half a century ago.

Something crashed to earth near Roswell on Independence Day 1947. If you are the US air force, or what is termed around here a non-believer, it was a weather balloon, and the little grey people seen being taken from the doomed craft were — as the air force told the world only this month — crash-test dummies for high-altitude parachute research.

But if you are any one of the believers packing the town, then it was a UFO, and the little grey people were . . . well, little grey people from some other heaven, and what has happened subsequently has been a cover-up of that fact.

But the core of the festival was the series of seminars and debates packed by the faithful, churning over the arguments fired into a frenzy by the news that University of California scientists have analysed fragments supposedly from the crash site — and found them to be isotopically incompatible with any earthly compound.

The high point, however, was the alien costume contest, conducted with the deadly earnest of a Milan catwalk show. The favourite was Morianna, a shapely alien belly dancer painted silver. She/it wore only a silvery lacy bra and a micro skirt but failed to win. "That ain't no costume," complained one of the judges.

Indeed, this is God's country as well as the UFO capital, as the sign outside one prefab church defiantly proclaimed. "Jesus Christ was the only heavenly body God sent crashing down to earth."



A Roswell police officer meets a friendly life-form PHOTO: J DAVID AKE

A Country Diary

Phil Gates

WITTON-LE-WEAR, Co Durham: Spectacular genitals confirmed the insect's identity — improbably large, scarlet, curled over its back like a scorpion's tail and equipped with a formidable claw: it could only be a scorpionfly. This afternoon's humid, overcast conditions were perfect for scorpionfly courtship — a tricky operation made easier by the male's use of its clawed genitals for grasping a mate while he diverts her attention with a meal of regurgitated saliva. This bizarre insect is the latest colonist of a small island, in the middle of the River Wear, that I have been watching since it first appeared after a flood almost a decade ago. When the water subsided the main current had changed course, leaving an island of coarse gravel just 20 yards long and a few inches above the surface. Within a year root systems of water mint, monkey flower, coltsfoot, creeping thistle and horsetails had begun to bind and stabilise the stones. Every successive flood left a layer of mud between the gravel, providing a seed bed for plants that trapped more particles and pebbles from floodwater. Now the island has grown to half an acre and today's quick survey revealed more than 80 different plant inhabitants. Upstream, where the island takes the full force of winter floods, pioneering colonisers still struggle for a foothold on bare gravel. Downstream a rising layer of fertile silt is developing a meadow flora of cranesbill, yellow rattle, meadow vetchling, purple vetch, meadowsweet and perforated St John's wort. This lush vegetation teems with insect life — damsel flies, mayflies, stoneflies, alderflies and now scorpionflies. Sooner or later another major flood will alter the course of the river again, but for now this evolving island grows more fascinating with every passing year.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

AROUND the end of the 18th century, many parents named their daughters "Philadelphia". Why?

THE NAME was already popular early in the 17th century among non-conformists, who liked its association with the Biblical city (Revelation III, 7) and its Greek meaning "brotherly love". It was less, not more, common by the late 18th century; but even if it had gained an American connotation, the War of Independence would not have ruled the name out, since many in Britain supported independence while many in America opposed it. — *Mike Lyle, Llangynog, Carmarthen*

ONLY two countries in the world have regular trade surpluses while all the others regularly trade in deficit. Where is all the money going?

ORTHODOX economists do not consider balances of trade to be significant since, in one way or another, the markets will clear. But the best hypothesis is that the money goes to multinational corporations, which never have deficits, except in some limited national accounting for tax purposes. Money, as we all know, is created by banks. Since something like 90 per cent of international capital flows is for currency speculation rather than investment, it may be argued that this money is not real — most of it exists only within the casino of world currency trading. If it is not real, then where the money is going is not a real question. Economics is now a science of illusion. — *Joan Remple, Ottawa, Canada*

HAPLOGRAPHY is the "inadvertent writing once of what should have been written twice". Is it the most useless word in the English language?

CHARMING though the other obscure words offered are, their proposers have all missed the vital point that language is determined by people's desire to express themselves. A word only exists if someone once needed it. Words obscure to the public may be essential to the specialist: doubtless historians using medieval manuscripts frequently encounter instances of haplography and need to refer to them.

There are similarly many words for customs which have now died out, such as the seeking of inspiration by lying in a bullock's hide behind a waterfall, but they can nevertheless still find applications. For example, "Treasury economic forecasts are about as accurate as taghairm".

The only exceptions are those words coined by show offs, usually with a knowledge of Greek or Latin, purely in an attempt to impress sesquipedalophobes (people with a loathing of long words).

However, such artificial constructs can hold no fear for custoderogosequands (followers of Notes & Queries). — *Philip Howell, Goettingen, Germany*

WHY do human beings usually only grow two sets of teeth?

ALL ANIMALS have a supply of teeth for a lifetime of natural use. But when humans invented agriculture 10,000 years ago, the change in diet made their population soar and their teeth rot. Palaeopathologists have shown that tooth decay was a rarity in pre-agricultural times. — *A Digon, Vitoria, Spain*

WHAT is the difference between erotica and pornography?

IT'S erotic when you use a feather, it's pornographic when you use the whole chicken — *Frank Boumphrey, Chagrin Falls, Ohio, USA*

Any answers?

WHY are MPs not allowed to call each other liars in the House of Commons, when we all know this is a prerequisite of the job? — *Andrew May, Maidenhead, Berkshire*

IF DOGS can understand certain commands such as their name, sit, etc, how much of the English language could they learn? Is it a matter of conditioning? Could certain breeds understand more than others? — *Roxanne Levy, Hatch End, Middlesex*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://ng.guardian.co.uk/

Full of sound and fury, signifying little

TELEVISION
Adam Sweeting

CHUCK YEAGER, the American test pilot who first flew at the speed of sound in the Bell X-1 rocket plane, was not amused when David Lean's film The Sound Barrier showed the British getting there first. Yet as **Breaking the Sound Barrier** (Secret History, Channel 4) showed, the British contribution had been a significant one, not least because American scientists had nicked all the data from the supersonic project already well advanced at Miles Aircraft in Reading in 1944. The Bell X-1 looked suspiciously similar to Miles's M52 design.

The Secret History film was a boys' own tale of the absurd heroism of the test pilots of the High Speed Unit at Farnborough, and a what-might-have-been story of the British aircraft industry. Bafflingly, the Miles aircraft was scrapped when it was almost ready to fly, even though members of the Miles team were certain they had solved the supersonic design problems.

Unfortunately, the film's claims to have discovered the truth behind the decision were less than compelling. The use of ominous music and a doomy narration only drew attention to the meagreness of the findings. Apparently, a Whitehall civil servant called Lockspeiser had visited a German research establishment after the war, saw that the Hun had favoured swept wings for high-speed flight, decided that the straight-wing Miles design was too dangerous, and personally cancelled it. Thus, we were invited to believe that a top-secret defence project with vast implications for British post-war strategic interests was scrapped by a little-known bureaucrat without reference to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet or the RAF. Go away, Secret History, and try again.

Planning to abandon central London? Think twice before moving to Hampstead Garden Suburb. **Dame Henrietta's Dream** (Omnibus, BBC1) told us how the suburb was founded at the turn of the century by the philanthropic Dame Henrietta Barnett, supposedly as a Utopian social model.

Something seems to have gone horribly wrong. Omnibus depicted a whining, backstabbing community, run like a scout camp with a 1,000-page rulebook, and sternly policed by the talented nit-picker and hair-splitter Christopher Kellerman. Into this unpleasant hothouse fell the proposal by the local orthodox Jewish community to turn the area into an *eruv*, where Sabbath laws are relaxed. The idea of creating a religious ghetto within this ghetto of small-mindedness has triggered all-out war.

As the parade of busybodies and pompous noncentities continued, you wondered if Omnibus was conducting a personal vendetta. There was the old soldier, festooned with campaign medals, complaining that he didn't land in Normandy only to have to suffer neighbours hanging duvets out of their windows. The Neighbourhood Watch is organised by an old boy who hectors the locals like a housemaster doling out chores in morning assembly. Ironic counterpoint was supposed to be provided by the dramatic society's production of Murder In The Cathedral, but the effect was ruined by the screaming tedium of the performance, organised with incomparable turgidness by director Fred Griessen.

Lost in Hollywood

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

THE first time I took a girl out to dinner in Los Angeles, she said, "Do you screw?" before we'd finished the soup. I can't remember what I replied when I'd finished choking. But **Swingers** reminded me of that occasion.

In Doug Liman's début feature, however, which is about struggling young actors trying to pull birds in LA, nobody makes so bold as to take a girl out to dinner. And nobody manages to bed one, either. The title is meant strictly ironically.

These boys are definitely potential losers. Not dogs, you understand. But the sort of blokeish chaps, American-style, who seem very unlikely ever to get it on. One of them, for instance, when told by his friend that he's already made it just by being young and around in Film City, says: "I host an open mike, I played a bus driver in a movie, and I've got an agent who specialises in magicians. How have I made it?"

In truth he hasn't, because he spends most of his time yearning for the girl he left behind in New York who is now going out with someone called Philippe. She won't even call him till the last reel and he ruins his friend's one chance of a certain night of bliss by insisting on ringing her from the bedroom in which he is frantically trying to undress the girl he's picked up.

Of course, he can't get her on the line and confesses all to the girl he's picked up, who is so sympathetic that he might well have got her into bed but for the fact that he just goes on and on.

Heading nowhere . . . Jon Favreau and Vince Vaughn in Swingers

Jon Favreau plays the mournful lover and Vince Vaughn his more confident friend, and it is a measure of the film's success that both (struggling actors, apparently) are about to become stars because they play hopeless non-starters so well.

Not only is there virtually no sex in the movie, but there are, more surprisingly, no drugs, either. And the only violence we see is when one of the group points a gun at a punk who's called him a bitch, which causes the punks to flee and the confident one to say, "Are you crazy? Haven't you seen Boyz N The Hood? Now they'll come after us and kill us."

Liman's film does have one little homage to Quentin Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs and another brief encounter with Martin Scorsese's GoodFellas. Otherwise, it tries nothing trickier than the truth. Which is not something Hollywood generally bothers with, since it isn't very exciting or romantic but which, if you can get hold of it, like Swingers seems to, makes for an exceptional calling card.

The bonus is that Liman's characters seem totally real as they slouch from one awful bar or party to another, avoiding "skanks" (ugly women) and looking as "money" (desirable) as possible.

They do, I suspect, what we've all done in our time, botching potential relationships and bluffing wildly as they do so. The girls, too, have their problems, waiting for two days for the return phone call as the mores of the place require and not at all certain what to say when it comes.

And Liman never makes the mistake of feeling either too sorry for them all or of descending into pontifications about their plight.

For 90 minutes or so, it's fun to speculate, and to watch ensemble playing for a good director that makes your average Hollywood movie look totally fake. The problem is that Liman will now almost certainly be persuaded to make one. Vaughn and Favreau already have.

No one can deny Spike Lee's ability as a polemical film-maker, but he often seems to lack heart, as if his anger at the perfidies of a white-dominated world are not matched by a fondness for his own race. There's something mean about the way he watches his characters at one remove.

Get on the Bus is highly critical of African-Americans, but there's a big change. This film has heart, and that's what makes it moving. The bus in question is on the way from LA to Washington, taking a disparate group of African-Americans towards the Million Man March in October 1995.

Among them are a father and son shackled together by court order so that the son can't decamp, a young man with a white mother who identifies as black, an actor, a film student, a devout Muslim, a gay pair and an old man who has seen it all. The driver is white.

Along the way, all hell breaks loose. The bus breaks down, the driver leaves, arguments break out about politics, homophobia, sexism and loyalty to the cause. And then the old man (beautifully played by Ossie Davis) has a heart attack. The question is, can this lot ever unite?

Lee, who made the film on Super 16 for very little money with the financial help of a few black supporters, orchestrates his story rather as if it's a superior soap, anxious to instruct but determined to please.

The result is not as contrived as it might be. It is done with fondness for its characters, performed by a cast of some of America's best black actors. Despite the schematic nature of the piece, Lee achieves a kind of spontaneity. Get On The Bus has energy, drama and poignancy.

Bach to front for our Nige

CONCERT
Edward Greenfield

WHO but Nigel Kennedy would think of playing an encore before his performance, as well as after? This concert at Birmingham's Symphony Hall was officially a grand centenary gala for the record company EMI, but Kennedy's appearance after a long sabbatical stole the thunder, and he responded in kind.

Instead of coming on before the Elgar Violin Concerto with the conductor, Sir Simon Rattle, he arrived alone, and proceeded to address us chummily, introducing his pre-encore, the Prelude from the E major Solo Partita, as he would a pop item: "Some German music to show we're not xenophobic."

Bored with the regular scene of orchestral concerts, our Nige has for the past few years been playing at more informal events. This was his first British performance of the Elgar concerto for years, although he has given it several airings abroad, and is about to make a new recording for EMI with, as here, Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

The Bach pre-encore, finely shaded, demonstrated that the Kennedy technique remains untarnished, and the Elgar — arguably the most taxing violin concerto in the repertory and certainly one of the longest — drove the point home.

If Kennedy's appearance marked the centre-point of the gala, the rest was just as formidable. As the briefest of starters, Rattle conducted the full Birmingham brass in a resplendent account of the fanfare that Sir William Walton wrote for EMI's 75th birthday. After that came a new work from Mark-Anthony Turnage, Four-Horned Fandango.

Crowning the gala came more Walton: a performance of Belshazzar's Feast with choral sounds such as I have never heard. We had not only Simon Halsey's splendid CBSO Chorus, but the visiting Cleveland Symphony Chorus — more than 300 voices combined in astonishing precision.

Down to earth from a rocket

POP
Caroline Sullivan

LIKE U2's Pop Mart, the other monster tour lumbering around the globe, Michael Jackson's HIStory 97 blinds you with number crunching: 43 trucks carry 1,200 tonnes of equipment, requiring 200 stage-hands and God knows how much electricity. The figures take up three pages of a press pack that is the closest most journalists will ever get to the man himself.

In the absence of comment from Jackson, who began the tour's British leg at Sheffield last week, one can only wonder how he feels each time he walks on stage (or rather, gets blasted on to it in a white plastic rocket ship). His insistence on being billed as the King of Pop, or sometimes just the Legend, suggests humility is not his strong suit.

One just assumes that when he emerges from the rocket, enrobed in clinging gold foil, he regards his surroundings with the quiet pleasure of the Queen surveying a map of Britain.

The words "fall", "Roman" and "empire" almost certainly do not cross his mind. Indeed, he seemed all but unaffected by the events of the five years since his last UK date. The abuse allegations and brief marriage to that other King's daughter seem, if anything, to have inspired him to greater heights of excess.

Given the dimensions of your average stadium, everything he did had to reach those half a mile away at the back, hence the immoderate use of flares and explosions. The music often seemed almost incidental to the spectacle, but the show had barely begun when the spectacle appeared to go wrong. The rocket landed stage centre, but its occupant did not emerge for several long minutes.

When he finally did, he was away. The show was everything we have been led to expect — huge, glitzy and generally more akin to a big budget sci-fi movie than a pop gig. The set mimicked the granite brutalism of Soviet architecture, a fitting backdrop for a 15m effigy of Jackson. Wacko as leader of the new world order.

Still, it is easier to accept him as Stalin's successor than as a saint, as was implied by footage of him with Mother Teresa and Gandhi. And was he trying to enhance his prole profile by making rude gestures at the US flag during the anti-government They Don't Care About Us? He is above fleshly matters, anyway, spurning the "fan" who tore at his clothes during You Are Not Alone.

Stripped of all the trappings, he would be a good pop singer who dances a bit. Maybe that was why the most moving bit was the Motown segment, which resuscitated the likes of I Want You Back in front of clips from his child-star days. The vivid proof that Jackson was once capable of spontaneity and joy raises the possibility that he could be again.

Lumpen giants at the river's edge . . . The Bathers At Asnières by Georges Seurat

Come on in, the water's lovely

Adrian Searle joins Seurat and his Bathers at the National Gallery's marvellous summer show

IT IS a sunny afternoon on a grassy river bank in the suburbs of Paris one summer in the early 1880s. Men and boys lounge on the grass, slumbering in the sun, idling away the afternoon. They stare at the river, watching the ferryman poling across the stream, dinghies tacking and going about, a man sculling into view. An adenoidal youth dangles his legs at the river's edge. Beside him lie his rumpled white shirt, his boots placed side by side, a boater with a pink band. A little way off, beyond a sandy dip where horses are brought to drink, two more figures while away the day.

We are close to the figures on the bank, almost among them, yet they ignore us, just as they appear to be ignoring one another, each isolated within his solitary space and solitary thoughts, each surrounded by a peculiar irradiating glow which appears and disappears around their contours. But these strange halos don't make these people gods, and they are all devoid of heroism. The figures are somehow out of scale with the world they inhabit, lumpen giants at the river's edge.

They've all been there for more than 114 years, mesmerised by the day, the activity on the river, in the painted light of this perpetual Sunday on the Seine at Asnières. On the false horizon, a train smokes its way across the railway bridge, and we can see the factories and gas-work chimneys of Clichy, magnificent and sad and bleached in the light.

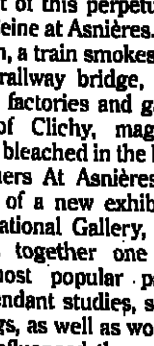
The Bathers At Asnières is the centrepiece of a new exhibition at London's National Gallery, a show that brings together one of the gallery's most popular paintings with its attendant studies, sketches and drawings, as well as works that may have influenced the artist and paintings of this stretch of the Seine by Georges Seurat's contemporaries. Here, too, are studies and drawings for Seurat's second major painting, La Grande Jatte, painted a year later, and depicting a similar afternoon, perhaps the same afternoon, under the trees on the island seen in The Bathers.

Seurat's Bathers At Asnières is a transitional, inconsistent masterpiece. The artist wanted much from this large work, and thought, should it have been accepted by the conservative jury of the 1884 Paris Salon, that public commissions and a degree of fame would accrue from it. Puvis de Chavannes, who was on the jury that year, would surely recognise the painting's indebtedness to his own, whimsically mythological riverside romp, Doux Pays. Seurat's painting — packed, according to this exhibition, with references not only to Chavannes, but also to Poussin, Bouguereau, Flandrin and Millet — was rejected.

By the time he painted The Bathers, Seurat, conventionally trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, had already developed his own, remarkable drawing style. The drawings are, to my mind, his greatest achievement. These reductive, tonal studies were executed in conté crayon, which grazed the paper with gravelly shadow, revealing form and light in those passages where the greasy crayon let the whiteness of the paper show through.

The drawings are mysterious, haunting and luminous, achieved by the simplest possible means. Not to be confused with mere sketches or compositional notations, they stand on their own as complete, consummate works. There's little doubt the artist himself saw them as such.

The drawings are both stripped to essentials and incredibly rich. What distinguishes Seurat is the tension between these tonal works, with their emphasis on mass and silhouette, and the dissolution of form made by his investigations and experiments in colour and optics in the paintings, his enthusiasm for new pigments and dyes which industry was bringing on to the market, his depiction of the melancholy of modern life.





Trainspotting . . . Monet's Men Unloading Coal (top) and Bernard's Iron Bridges, Asnières

Precedents for The Bathers are numerous, and the composition of it is in many ways highly conventional. Examples of earlier works which Seurat may have encountered — Poussin's 1638 The Finding Of Moses, from the Louvre, Luc-Olivier Merson's ludicrous St Anthony Of Padua Preaching To The Fishes, the Bouguereau, Ingres and Flandrin — are interesting enough, but the main thrust of the exhibition concentrates on hinterland scenes between nature and the city, the river and industry.

The area around Asnières became a popular subject for Seurat's contemporaries: a highly unusual Monet, from 1875, worked up in the painter's studio, shows a grim scene of men unloading coal beside the railway bridge. Signac, painting a view from a boat as it approaches the Asnières bridges in 1888, depicts the scene as though he were stoned out of his mind, everything fragmenting into a dazed Pointillism. There is always a train on the bridge. Emile Bernard's Iron Bridges, Asnières, of 1887, views the scene as a cold, alienating and alienated environment, peopled by a couple of black silhouettes. One can imagine Bernard's couple cruising for an urchin to murder.

When Seurat painted The Bathers, he hadn't yet developed the corpuscular, pulsing light of full-blown Pointillism which turned painting into something like an optical tapestry. Instead we find something more furtive and transitional, as though, just on the periphery of vision, the world is beginning to atomise. The collapse of mass and form has begun as a subliminal disintegration. It is a transitional painting of a transitional world.

This marvellous show is a record of the birth and rebirth of the modern world, and of an art to deal with modern life. Inevitably, it is an art of tragedy, and one without heroes or gods.

Directors are growing old and money is drying up: **Michael Billington** on a crisis in European theatre

Stages of decay

"THEATRE is dead," claims the trendy young media-brat in David Hare's play Amy's View. "Why don't we admit it? It's been superseded. It had its moment but its moment has gone." It's an argument familiar to anyone who reads the papers. Hardly a month goes by without someone drumming up a bit of instant copy by telling us that live theatre is a dead duck. The idea is that it's an élitist conspiracy kept going artificially by a band of devoted apologists.

But might it be true? Is theatre, if not dead exactly, suffering from a paralysing sickness? An irrelevance, perhaps, in the new hi-tech age? Much more significant than the views of hard-pressed hacks are those of the theatre people. I recently attended the Second European Theatre Forum in St Etienne where some 60 or so critics, directors, writers and actors debated the state of the art in apocalyptic tones that made Cassandra look like the Cheeryble Brothers. With a few striking exceptions, everyone seemed to agree that European theatre was in extreme crisis.

The British party — including myself, writers Timberlake Wertenbaker and Mark Ravenhill, and Royal Court deputy director James MacDonald — listened with mild astonishment. We, after all, have been trained to regard the French, German and Swedish theatres, in particular, as models of subsidised enlightenment. Yet on all sides one heard cries of breast-beating despair. "Public theatre is dancing on a volcano and is not aware of the fact." Or, "Theatre is no longer the go-between for history and society".

In improvised debate, the gloomier-than-thou note rapidly becomes infectious: you prove your intellectual credentials by upping the crisis-ridden ante. But, reading the 30 reports submitted to the Forum from individual countries, a much more complex picture emerges. Theatre still goes on, sometimes in abundance (in Iceland there are more spectators than inhabitants). But the same questions recur. What is theatre for? Has it now lost the capacity to change people's lives?

I suspect the European crisis stems from certain facts. One is that the star-directors who, much more than in Britain, dominate the scene, are all of a certain age. Ingmar Bergman is 79, Giorgio Strehler 76, Luca Ronconi 74, Peter Brook 72, Peter Zadek 71. Even Peter Stein is 60 this year. Most of them are still hard at work, none more so than Brook, whose Happy Days comes to London this autumn, and Stein whose magisterial Cherry Orchard goes to Edinburgh.

But there is a sense that the age of giants is over. And where are their successors? Germany has Karen Beier whose incredibly sexy Romeo And Juliet was given the critical thumbs-down in London, Christoph Marthaler, and Frank Castorf who creates great chaotic spectacles. France has Stephane Braunschweig, shortly to direct Measure For Measure for Nottingham Playhouse, and Olivier Werner, who recently staged Maeterlinck's Pelleas et Melisande as a waking dream. But the age of the directorial magi — part Prospero, part auteur — who left their imprint on European theatre seems to be drawing to a close.

The sense of crisis also stems from a continent-wide decline in subsidy. In Britain we have long learned to live with puny public funding. In the rest of Europe the decline from stratospheric levels of finance comes as a rude shock. In St Etienne, one French director spoke of the horror — "a disaster for the public" — of theatres having to raise 20 per cent of their own income. I hesitated to point out that our National Theatre habitually generates 54 per cent of its total turnover.

But the crisis in European theatre is motivated far more by the loss of Utopias. In western Europe, even with the advent of centre-left governments, the socialist dream is fading; in eastern Europe they are rapidly discovering the limitations of a free-market economy. The result is a desperate search for new ideals.

According to the German critic, Franz Wille, the significant new plays in his territory "endow art with the power of beneficial regeneration". He gives the examples of Botho Strauss's Ithaca, which turns to the Homeric past for its inspiration, and Peter Handke's Preparations For Immortality, which suggests the artist is a just king. Wille wittily dubs this "aesthetic fundamentalism — art, as the new religion".

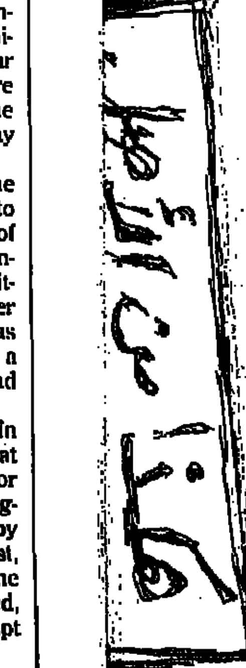
MEANWHILE in eastern Europe, where theatre has traditionally occupied an oppositional role, there seems no clear idea of what its purpose now is.

So is theatre, other than as a musical diversion, doomed? I don't believe so. Even amid the collective pessimism of the St Etienne Forum, there were pockets of resistance: exciting events in Stuttgart, an Italian attempt to take theatre into discos, an upsurge of new writing in Catalonia confirmed by the Royal Court's recent Voices From Spain season. Also it is worth remembering that Europe is not the universe, that maybe some of the Old World energy is now moving to Buenos Aires or Beijing.

More generally, it seems foolish to write off the theatre. In an age of cinema, video, global television and satellite broadcasting, theatre has become more rather than less important: the last refuge of the individual conscience. As popular entertainment becomes ever more standardised, so theatre is the one public medium where you can say whatever you want.

Theatre also is, paradoxically, the medium most susceptible to change. The spatial relationship of actor to audience is a matter for constant debate. The form of drama itself is endlessly shifting — never have I known a time when there was less consensus as to what makes a play. Theatre begins in a room and expands to contain the universe.

Admittedly theatre in Britain is in difficulty. But to infer from this that the medium itself is dead, dying or in a state of terminal decay, is to ignore the portents. Theatre lives by its ability to adapt. And, I suggest, its greatest opportunities lie in the confrontation with a standardised, dumbed-down, spiritually bankrupt mass-culture.



Casanova unbound

D M Thomas

History of my Life
by Giacomo Casanova
translated by Willard R. Trask
Johns Hopkins six volumes £66

WHEN Venetian-born Giacomo Casanova was 11, he attended a gathering with his mother at which an English visitor quoted a Latin epigram: *"Discite grammatici cur mascula nomina cunnus/ Et cur femineum mentula nomen habet."* ("Teach us, grammarians, why cunnus (vagina) is a masculine noun/ and why mentula (penis) is feminine.") After a little thought, Giacomo provided the answer in a perfect Latin pentameter: *"Disce quod a domino nomina servus habet."* (It is because the slave takes his name from his master.) The Englishman embraced the astounding boy several times. It was this occasion, Casanova writes, that sowed in him the desire for literary fame. In the same year, 1736, he lost his virginity. The two dominant chords in his life had been struck.

Giacomo would like to have specialised in medicine; in modern times he might have become a gifted — if somewhat raffish — psychoanalyst; but his widowed mother, an actress, secured him a priestly patron who prepared the young man for the church. But the spirit of liberty and libertinage soon drew him into a wide-ranging and freebooting life. He moved from city to city across Europe, making fairly shady financial deals which often got him expelled — off he would go in his carriage, with the latest mistress beside him. In Paris, he founded the State lottery. He started a silk business, dabbled in alchemy and homoeopathy and conversed with Voltaire and Catherine the Great. With delicious appropriateness, he helped Da Ponte write the libretto for Don Giovanni.

In casinos and bed-chambers, he gambled. Financial deals vie with women in his Life. His affairs are the Köchel-numbers of his life: from the gavottes of shadowy couplings in carriages to double concertos and even one long operatic intrigue in his native Venice. There are — from a swift survey of these 4,000 pages — roughly 130 K-numbers in Casanova's oeuvres: not an extraordinarily high number for history's supreme, archetypal womaniser, for Casanova was a gourmet, not a gourmand.



Giacomo Casanova gives his mistress a hand with her stockings

Fire almost consumed his manuscript when a bomb fell on a Leipzig bank during the second world war. The original text had never been published. The true text appeared only in the sixties. The present edition is the first paperback edition of Willard R. Trask's superb translation, published in the sixties. The six handsome volumes are helpfully annotated and tastefully illustrated. Apart from all else, they are a Baedeker of 18th century Europe.

Nonwithstanding earlier bowdlerisation, Casanova is never pornographic. The comparatively rare details are usually delicate; the blend of saliva and oysters, for example, while kissing and dining with a mistress. The very antithesis of porn, his art delights in recording his partner's conversation and changing moods; in anticipation and delay as much as in consummation; in simply contemplating her face. "If faces were not seen, a man would always remain the constant lover of the first woman who had pleased him."

His erotic imagination was contrapuntal; he loved trios, in which beautiful women pleasured each other as well as, or instead of, him. He devotes the longest, grandest account to an affair in Venice, in 1755-6, with a beautiful nun who equalled him in possessing a carnality so limitless it becomes a kind of spirituality. She persuades him to let their lovemaking be watched by her erotic "tutor", the French ambassador — soon to become a cardinal.

Casanova finds himself helpless to prevent the intrigue from developing to the point where it is painful; forced to allow the ambassador to enjoy his — Casanova's — longer-lasting mistress together with the nun. And Casanova, somewhat illogically, burns with jealousy.

But he would have shuddered at the vapid brutalism of our modern sexual "culture". He needed style, wit, intrigue and — to experience the greatest pleasure — love.

The woman whom he appears to have loved most was a modest, witty and intelligent Frenchwoman called Henriette, met when he was 23.

Thirteen years later, Casanova put up at a hotel in Geneva. He saw scratched on the windowpane: "You will forget Henriette too." "I felt my hair stand on end," he recalls. "We had stayed in that very room when she parted from me to return to France." She had scratched the words with a diamond ring he had given her.

Writing in old age, he exclaims passionately, "No, I have not forgotten her, and it is balm to my soul every time I remember her." He made sure, through this incomparable History, that we don't forget her either.

Almighty shadows

Tim Radford

Quest For Kim: In Search of Kipling's Great Game
by Peter Hopkirk
John Murray 273pp £15.99

Explorers of the Western Himalayas 1820-1895
by John Keay
John Murray 571pp £15.99

Spy on the Roof of the World
by Sydney Wignall
Canongate 267pp £16.99

FOR Rudyard Kipling, the gap between life and art was very narrow. "Did you see that poor Dury was killed by those swine?" he wrote to Lionel "Stalky" Dunsterville in January 1886. "There's £1,800 worth of education gone to smash . . ." Departmental Ditties was published that year. In them are lines that stick inanely in the head: "A scrimmage in a Border Station — / A canter down some dark defile — / Two thousand pounds of education / drops to a ten rupee jezail".

He had just turned 20. He started early on two-for-the-price-of-one stuff: in September 1884, at 18, he wrote to his Auntie Edith about his first experience of opium (in a fever), and of a visit as a reporter to an opium den in Lahore. In a week, his newspaper published the extraordinary short story, "The Gate Of A Hundred Sorrows". Anyone who reads his letters or his newspaper sketches, keeps being struck by it, as if by a fist. Kipling had a way of seeing double: the first time as reportage, the second as fiction.

Peter Hopkirk, a Times reporter and for many years a chronicler of the battle for Asia's high ground, set out in search of the real people and places turned into fiction in Kim. The novel is, of course, the story of a Raj-born Irish orphan, more comfortable with his Indian identity than his sahib one, who gets caught up in the secret-service work that kept the British from losing India.

Kim is a book that becomes an obsessive favourite, and Hopkirk indulges the obsession: he begins, like the novel, with the Wonder House in Lahore and follows Kim about northern India and the Hills, in search of the identities that must have informed Creighton Sahib, Mahbub Ali the Afghan horse trader, Hurree Babu the Healer of Sick Pearls, and so on.

The journey is curiously trudging: partly because Hopkirk has to retell the novel as he goes along, partly because some of it is impossible anyway. You simply cannot catch the 3.25am train from Lahore to Umballa these days. A frontier appeared in 1947.

But there is a bigger problem. Kim is not just a book; it is one of the most extraordinarily palpable landscapes ever created in words. A search for the "reality" behind it is doomed: Kim is one of those rare books that imposes reality.

When Kipling lay ill with fever in New York in 1899, hushed crowds gathered outside his hotel, blocking the traffic. When he recovered, Henry James wrote him an almost drivelling letter: "You have visited the mountains of the moon and come back on a tense wire . . ." There were get-well-soons from Mark Twain, Theodore Roosevelt, the editor of the Times and the Kaiser of Germany. And all this was *before* Kipling wrote his finest stuff. One sees Hopkirk's handicap. When you walk in footsteps like Kim's, you walk in an almighty shadow.

The battle for supremacy in the Himalayas began long before Kim, and goes on still. Sydney Wignall led a Welsh Himalayan expedition in 1955, and was recruited into the Great Game to do a bit of spying for the Indians: the Chinese were a menace on the Tibetan border then, as now. They got arrested, and interrogated. He confessed, up to a point. This book comes with endorsements from Trevor Howard, Bryan Forbes and Sir John Mills who says "A combination of Kipling and Le Carré . . . enthralling." Who are we to argue?

John Keay's Explorers Of The Western Himalayas 1820-1895 is a bit of a cheat: the publisher has simply enfolded Keay's classic When Men And Mountains Meet with his other wonderful book The Gilgit Game. It draws on the Great Game's great players — among them Curzon and Colonel Durand and [illegible] Ney and Francis Younghusband. Younghusband bumped into his Russian opposite number Grombtchevsky high on a pass in the Pamir. They camped together and toasted each other, and as they parted Younghusband was told "that he hoped we might meet again, either in peace in St Petersburg or in war on the Indian frontier; in either case I might be sure of a warm welcome." In today's politics, the Indians and the Chinese might not be so accommodating to one another.

Gutter-sniping entertainment

Katharine Whitehorn

Felix in the Underworld
by John Mortimer
Viking 288pp £16.99

MYSTERY writing pleases most when it offers a world that you enjoy as well as the suspense: the horse world of Dick Francis or medieval Shrewsbury with Cadfael and so on. Felix in his underworld occupies a cosy seat in the corner of the wine bar known as Booksy London, though that's not the underworld of the title. Its hero is a nearly-wimp who writes in fading pastels from a seaside town, and lusts half-heartedly after his publicity woman, a girl called Brenda Bodkin for (I imagine) the sole purpose of allowing Felix to hope that he can "his quietus make with a bare Bodkin". Felix finds himself pursued from literary lunch to book-signing by a mysterious Gavin, who, in an attempt to get himself off the hook at Prod (the Child Support Agency), manages to land Felix with the alleged paternity of a 10-year-old son.

Desperately, Felix tries to reason with him, argue him out of it, and finally leaves threatening messages on his answering machine; so when Gavin is found battered to death, Felix is the obvious suspect. After a spell among the homeless trying to track down the real murderer, Felix ends up in jail, from which he is finally extricated by the efforts of Bodkin, who becomes increasingly interested in him, professionally anyway, as he becomes more and more drenched in scandal.

Mortimer could, to my mind, have been a lot more savage about the publishing world. This is not especially nail-biting, either — I guessed the whodunnit part some 50 pages before the end. But what you read John Mortimer for is his witty and perceptive eye on life, his turn of phrase. He writes of a beach "empty except for elderly couples, their raincoats blown flat across their bodies, calling after wet dogs who bounded off to sniff and clamber on each other"; a TV "glowed and burbled, a meaninglessly talking light". Felix in the distant past took home the seemingly colourless girl who was to become his wife: "He was talking to her about ambiguity in literature, hinting at greater mysteries which don't necessarily have to be understood by the audience, or indeed by the writer, when she loved to unzip his trousers."

He calls the yellow paint on the prison walls "an attempt at cheerfulness, like the laughter of lawyers in the corridors of the magistrates' court" and, indeed, his thrusts at his fellow lawyers, though fewer, are more telling than his feints at the book world. He writes of the young barrister inveighing against the ascendancy, as he sees it, of female Ugandan lawyers: "He could carry on for hours about snobbery at the Bar and deep-rooted prejudices against white, upper-class males"; and of the ones who talk across their client as if he wasn't there, like surgeons over a terminally ill patient.

There are also priceless scenes among the homeless to whose street level Felix descends; there's a beggar who says of Anna Darling, a musical based on Anna Karenina, that it's "not a bad play to beg outside", but "opera's best; people feel guilty about going to the opera and all that money they've paid". And there's a choice scene where her scabrous and jubilant mates spring from hospital, one Flo, carrying her, bed and all, back to her normal pitch.

Graham Greene divided books between the agonisingly serious and what he called Entertainments. This is an Entertainment, though perhaps a bit too literate for the likes of Flo to read, even so. But for the rest of us, it is fine.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

An Anthology of Chinese Literature, ed and tra Stephen Owen (Norton, £18.95)

IN 1918, Arthur Waley's translations of Chinese poems became hugely successful, and one wonders if the same could happen with this anthology. It is a staggering achievement: Professor Owen has collected the high spots of almost 3,000 years of culture. What we have here is both alien and familiar; Meng Jiao's eighth-century lament could have been written yesterday: "The bad poets all win public office, / good poets cling uselessly to the hills." Or: "Road's perils are not in its distance: / just ten paces can crack a wheel. / Love's troubles are not in numbers: / just one evening scars the soul." Professor Owen takes the trouble to put the writers and their works in historical context, so even though we are unable to appreciate the depth of allusion of many of the works, we at least have something to be getting on with.

Unskinny: Cartoons by Lucy Sweet (Quartet, £6)

SWEET'S heroines are — well, unskinny; they eat lard, drink, smoke, ponce off the state, have huge dumps and go on the blob at inconvenient times. Many stories involve dishy celebs like Johnny Depp, Ewan MacGregor and that bloke from ER popping up in mundane capacities, as if atoning for their fame. I found this collection relentlessly funny. Artwork deliberately slapdash, like Thurber's. It answers, finally, Freud's baffled "What do women want?" Answer: "Tousle-haired lovelies who are good in bed and make shelves." I'm in love.

Diamond Geezers, by Greg Williams (Fourth Estate, £6.99)

MINDER with knobs on: a trawl through the seedy side of London's gangland. The plot — about lurv, really — means that it is too soft-hearted to be as hard-boiled as it would like to be, but what really lifts this novel is Williams's language. The Cockney tough-guy patter could, for all I know, be made up, but it still sings. Read this book and you will be saying "Knowotlf*** inmean?", "Yeravinalaugharent'cha?" and "Areyoushaw?" for the rest of the week. Everything will be either pukkah or moody. This book's pukkah.

Holy Smoke, by G Cabrera Infante (Faber, £7.99)

A RAMBLING book, full of hundreds and hundreds of allusions to smoking: mainly cigars, but snuff, pipes and fags, too. I should point out that Infante has a thoroughly infantile obsession with puns.

Quicksands of Colombia

Natasha Walter

News of a Kidnapping
by Gabriel García Márquez
Cape 291pp £16.99

WHENEVER critics like George Steiner state that the novel is dead, all that most dissenters have to do is to drop the name of Gabriel García Márquez. This month sees the 30th anniversary of the publication of One Hundred Years Of Solitude, always seen as a landmark not just because of the book, but because of its knock-on effects. García Márquez is now acclaimed as the leader of an international clan of magic realists that numbers among its members Isabel Allende, Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri and Jeanette Winterson. With their delight in taking characters through dreams and marvels as well as everyday life, the magic realists are taken to be the writers who turned a 19th century European genre into a 20th century, universal one.

But, as Margaret Anne Doody reminded us in her recent study, The True Story Of The Novel, the novel has always been a form in which magic and realism sat comfortably side by side. And García Márquez was not even the first of his generation to get back to magic. Borges, 41 years ago in Fictions, or Günter Grass, 38 years ago in The Tin Drum, or Vladimir Nabokov, 28 years ago in Ada, also crushed together myth and realism.

But García Márquez certainly pulled the readers and the fellow writers. His sensual, chanting, sonorous style has been echoed in hundreds of books, good and bad. He has forced Europeans to realise that they no longer have a privileged relationship with the novel. When people look back at 20th century South America, they will see it through his eyes as surely as we see 19th century Russia through the eyes of Tolstoy.

So yes, we feel we know who García Márquez is, why he won the Nobel Prize for literature. He seems like a dead writer, wrapped up and put away on a shelf labelled "magic realism". What a shock it is, then, to open García Márquez's latest offering, News Of A Kidnapping. This is a piece of reportage, the true story of 10 people kidnapped by Pablo Escobar, head of the cocaine cartel, in his struggle to convince the Colombian government not to extradite him to the United States.



Keeping his powder dry . . . In News Of A Kidnapping Gabriel García Márquez bears witness to the terror of life in Colombia

Here, we miss García Márquez's magical set-pieces: there are no plagues of insomnia, no seas giving off a scent of roses, no knocking bones. There are some tiny details that have the hallucinatory precision of those in his novels — the priest who keeps dropping his contact lenses, the hostage who spends her time obsessively polishing her nails. But against such moments of coloured precision, much of the book is recorded in journalese.

Above all we miss the certainty of García Márquez's fiction. García Márquez has always been the most omniscient narrator in the world. He always knew not only the destinies of his characters, but even why those destinies were sometimes thwarted. One of the most telling sentences in One Hundred Years runs: "Aureliano Jose had been destined to find . . . happiness . . . to have seven children, and to die of old age, but the bullet that entered his back and shattered his chest had been directed by a wrong interpretation of the cards." The way García Márquez made his characters into the puppets of fate gave his novels a thudding sense of tragedy, but also felt reassuring: everything had its place, everyone their destiny.

A sense of tragedy also hangs over News Of A Kidnapping. Of the 10 people whom Escobar kidnapped, two died, one shot deliberately and one accidentally. But the writer of these characters' fates is not García Márquez, it is the mysterious Pablo Escobar. And the hostages are locked in a struggle with destiny, a desperate desire to understand what is going on, to escape death, to hold on to life. This world is characterised by unbearable uncertainty.

In News Of A Kidnapping, the meaning of symbols and portents is always up for grabs. One day her guard tells one of the hostages: "A butterfly's been on the courtyard gate since last night . . . When they killed the other Priscos, the same thing happened . . . A black butterfly stayed in the bathroom for three days." But the hostage, Maruja Pachon, stays calm. "This one now, is it black or tan?" she asks. "Tan," replies the guard. "Then it's a good omen," she insists. "It's the black ones that are unlucky." Who is right? Or is the butterfly nothing to do with the hostages at all?

This uncertainty, present in everyone's lives, is particularly obvious in a country where kidnappings and random killings are ever-present; where groups of terrorists can hold the government to their demands; where other terrorists can't decide what their demands are; and others still have entered the government. In 1991, after the death of one of the hostages whose story he tells here, García Márquez said: "We are sinking in the quicksands of ambiguity. There is no war, but there is fighting. There are promises but no negotiations. There are starts but no conclusions."

Here, García Márquez gives us that quicksand quality of Colombian life; and although it is far less vivid and satisfying than any of his novels, there is something impressive about it. García Márquez puts aside his ferocious talent in order simply to bear witness. It wouldn't have taken much for him to have pushed this horrifying story into the more lovable and gorgeous world of his fictions; that he sticks to journalism is, in a writer of his stature, somehow heroic.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £12.99 contact CultureShop (see left)

Swashbuckler in a slanging match

Stella Tillyard

Black Ajax
by George MacDonald Fraser
HarperCollins 250pp £16.99

"WHAT the hell, man! Are ye feared Molineaux'll leather my chap, is that what ails thee?"

"If he does, and 'tis Lombard Street to a China Orange he will," says Pad, "twill be because Tom's the fighter I made him."

If you're not dicked in the nob and can understand this passage from George MacDonald Fraser's new novel, then the chances are that you are already an initiate into the Flashman cult and that you will enjoy this latest offering. Through a kaleidoscope of voices from the Fancy — as William Hazlitt called the boxing fraternity — it tells the story of Tom Molineaux, the "black Ajax" and freed slave who came from America in 1810 to fight England's heavyweight champion, Tom Cribb.

Molineaux arrives brimming with talent and spirit but without technique or training and is taken up by Captain Buck Flashman, father of MacDonald Fraser's infamous hero Harry Flashman. Unjustly robbed of victory in the first match with Cribb, Molineaux runs to seed in drink and among women, loses the rematch and eventually dies abandoned and almost alone, a broken hulk, in 1818.

Molineaux is the novel's absent centre, allowed to emerge — apart from in one short letter — only in reported speech. Its real subject, skilfully woven from the voices of Captain Flashman, the trainer Paddington Jones, the publican and ex-boxer Bill Richmond, and the essayists Pierce Egan and William Hazlitt among others, is the way in which Molineaux became the tragic object of others' aspirations and imaginings: a source of profit for Flashman, prestige for Jones, copy for journalists and hope of emancipation for Richmond.

Like Molineaux, these motives emerge only fleetingly from the teller's accounts, because, except for Richmond, all the speakers claim to be acting disinterestedly. Half-black and once a slave himself, Richmond believes that black people "will always think like slaves until one of them wins . . . fair and square something which the white man believes belongs to him alone", and that if a black man can win the Championship of England, "he will have changed the world". His remorse and anger make him the book's real hero and its only trustworthy voice.

Black Ajax is told with great confidence and humour. MacDonald Fraser mines Egan's monthly serial "Boxiana" and Hazlitt's classic essay "The Fight" to good effect, and then, to show how knowing he is, introduces both men as characters. But the key to his cult status surely lies in his linguistic conjurings and coinings. The novel is written partly in a language that is presumably peculiar to the Flashman series — "he was the killingest gentleman around", "he opened an eye and gave us a sleepy little smile slantendicular" — and partly in "authentic" Regency cant or slang.

Much of the latter is derived from the classic Dictionary Of The Vulgar Tongue, a "Dictionary of Buckish Slang, University Witt and pickpocket eloquence" originally published in 1785. The Dictionary Of The Vulgar Tongue probably created a world that never existed beyond its covers. It is a world governed by language and inhabited by fraudsters, thieves and gamblers. MacDonald Fraser builds a picture of Regency London which was, in Flashman's words: "free and easy and jolly, no one giving a dam, churches half-empty and hells packed full, fashion and frolic the occupations, and sport the religion."

This is not an England in the middle of the biggest religious revival for 150 years. No matter; MacDonald Fraser's readers are not in the business of historical accuracy. They are entering a constructed world. It is Georgette Heyer for boys, and even those baggages, like me, who do not make up MacDonald Fraser's natural constituency, can admire him for the solidity of his set-building.





ILLUSTRATION. BARRY LARKING

Deluge of rain and politics

Paul Evans

WEIRD weather. After the driest spring for two centuries we had the wettest June since 1879. More rain fell last month than in the whole of last summer. It is said that wolves in eastern Europe thrive during times of political and social unrest. Perhaps these storms circling the British Isles have been doing the same thing. Change is in the air. Or is that wishful thinking?

During our mini-monsoon season, wooded hills all but vanished under a shifting, smoky cape of cloud. Inside, the woods became gloriously sodden and are still dank. The air is spicy with the sharp green scent of bracken, the sticky sweetness of honeysuckle drapes and hidden stinkhorn. Within this humid wood-mist, fungi are stirring early from damp loam and rotten logs.

Trickles merged into narrow streams; streams into brooks; brooks into rivers. Summer rains have in recent years been ephemeral, but this year's are persistent, strident, scouring the stream beds in a cleansing tide.

Rivers charged with a now uncustomary supply of water have been good for wildlife. In recent years, swans have had to forage in the nasty gunge at the bottom of shallow rivers and many suffered and died from botulism poisoning. Not so this year. Swans sail, resplendently white with their healthy cygnets, along vigorous rivers into the future. But what of the future for wildlife in Britain? All this weird weather may be connected to climate change, but there's also a political climate change going on.

Environmentalists were quick off the mark to tell the New Labour government what it should be doing. The honeymoon period is just about over and there's a pause as green results are anticipated. One of the most forceful challenges put to the new government has come from Dr Derek Ratcliffe, who was chief scientist of the former Nature Conservancy Council. In the recent issue of the conservation journal Ecos, Ratcliffe attacked the Conservative ideology of the previous government which led to a "seizure" in most areas of conservation policy, the legacy of which must be addressed by Labour.

Dr Ratcliffe sketches a dismal picture of this legacy: public subsidies draining into private landholding interests to the detriment of wildlife and habitats; free enterprise and deregulation allowed to destroy cherished landscapes; the ascendance of me-first, Little Englander materialism; and a reluctance to intervene in important issues of environmental and social justice.

It will not just take a shift in policy but, says Dr Ratcliffe, a "more humane and ethical political philosophy" is needed in order to "reject the coarsening Darwinian excesses of Thatcherism, and repair the damaged relationships within society, as well as to absorb the message of the New Environmentalism".

Interestingly the rain, which seems to have abated for the moment, has hardly stopped since Labour got into power. Floods caused misery in northeast Scotland. Farmers, holiday makers and events organisers have complained. Although little may have penetrated the deeper aquifers, the unseasonal rains brought a much needed life-blood to woodlands and wetlands. Let's just hope that the weird weather and the changes in the political climate both augur well for nature. That would make a change wouldn't it?

Ecos: a review of conservation is available from BANC, Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE, UK, tel 00 44171 241 0042

Chess Leonard Barden

NOVGOROD last month featured something unique in top world chess. The organisers announced an experimental scoring system, three points for a win and one for a draw, to stimulate enterprising play. But then Fide said that the novelty was contrary to its regulations, and officials got cold feet and published both scoring systems in their daily bulletins.

This fudge had a bizarre effect on Nigel Short, who began badly then won three in a row. Entering the final round, with White against Kasparov, he was in danger of tying for bottom place on the traditional system, and could also tie for first using the new method — but they drew in 25 moves.

Novgorod was Kasparov's first tournament since his débâcle against Deep Blue, which gave huge encouragement to his human rivals watching him crack up under pressure. Kasparov needed a boost, but though he won first prize, it was more of a grind than usual.

His loss below gained significance when Fide published its July rating list showing Kramnik established as world No 2: Kasparov 2,820, Kramnik 2,770, Anand 2,765, Topalov and Karpov 2,745. Adams has risen to 11th place on 2,680 ahead of Sadler 2,665 and Short 2,660; Britain has three in the top 20 and seven in the top 80, the best for any nation bar Russia.

Kramnik v Kasparov

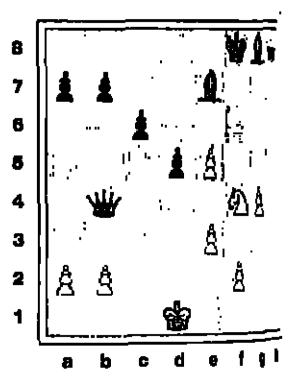
1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 b4 Nh5 10 Re1 Nf4 11 Bf1 a5 12 bxa5 Rxa5 13 Nd2 c5 14 a4 Ra6 15 Ra3!? A new idea in a much analysed variation. The rook helps White's Q-side action and also gives defensive support to the K-side. Kasparov's reply looks a promising gambit, but the cautious 15 ... h6 may be better.

g5 16 g3 Nh3+ 17 Bxh3 Bxh3 18 Qh5 Qd7 19 Qxg5 h6 20 Qe3 f5 21 Qe2 f4 22 Nb5 Kh7? Black's king proves vulnerable to tactics here. The natural attacking move 22 ... Ng6! [illegible] for Kasparov's pawn offer [illegible] Qh5? Bg4! 24 Qxg6 Rf6 [illegible] queen.

23 gxf4 exf4 24 Kh1 [illegible] **Nf3! Ng6 26 Rg1** Threat[illegible] Ng5+. If Ne5? 27 Nxe5. [illegible] **Qxf3 Ne5 28 Qh5** Qf7 29 [illegible] Much better than 29 Qxf[illegible] when Black's central knight [illegible] than offsets White's extra [illegible] **Nxc4 30 Rf3! Be5?** The great [illegible] tician falls for a Deep Blue-style [illegible] tic. However, Qe7 31 Qe[illegible] favours White. **31 Nc7!** Rxa4[illegible] he sees Qxc7 32 Qxh6+! Kxh6 [illegible] Rh3 mate.

32 Bxf4! Resigns. For if [illegible] 33 Ne6 Rg8 34 Rxg8 Qxg8 35 [illegible] Kh8 36 Qf6+ Kh7 37 Nf8+ [illegible] Kramnik, 21, is still well behind [illegible] world champion in terms of [illegible] points, but as this game confirms his personal score against Kasparov is better than any other grandmaster[illegible]

No 2481



Hans Berliner v Dr E [illegible] US postal championship [illegible] White (to move) has only two [illegible] for a piece, and if 1 Ng6+ Kf[illegible] Qh6+ Ke8 or 1 Ne6+ Kf7 or 1 [illegible] Qe4. "It didn't appear hope[illegible]" wrote Berliner. "Then one eve[illegible] while lying on the floor analysi[illegible] had the critical insight." Berliner won the game, and the US title [illegible] later became America's first [illegible] postal champion. What did he [illegible]

No 2480: 1 Bc6! and [illegible] next move.

Quick crossword no. 375

Across

5 Customers (9)
8 Separate — portion (4)
9 Rise — for a cardinal? (8)
10 Niche (6)
11 Book — a flight (6)
13 Awkward (6)
15 Torn (6)
16 Waterfall — impairing one's vision (8)
18 Precise (4)
19 Classical female dancer (9)

Down

1 Stage (8)
2 Ebb (6)
3 Vie (6)
4 Dismal — colour (4)
6 National symbol of Canada (5,4)
7 Conform (9)
12 Adversary (8)
14 Annual (6)
15 Answer — which may be dispensed with (6)
17 Unfortunately (4)

Last week's solution

OSPREY SCRAPE
CLOUT BANQUET
PROSAIC ENTER
GIBRALTAR
UNCLE EXPLOIT
PERSIST SETUP
TROPHY UNTRUE

Bridge Zia Mahmood

I ALWAYS look forward to the visits of Gabriel Chagas to New York. The Brazilian star is a source of endless anecdotes, which he will relate while jumping from one to another of the 20 or so languages in which he is fluent. He is also a gourmet, so well known in the best restaurants that he is permitted the almost unheard-of privilege of bringing his own rare vintage wines to accompany his dinners.

After one such feast, having eaten far too much while drinking three of Gabriel's bottles with the respect they deserved, we settled down to coffee in a state of happy repletion. "You are my partner," began Chagas, "and you pick up these cards, vulnerable against not:

♠4 ♥Q109763 ♦865 ♣KQ7

"and the auction begins like this:

South Chagas	West	North You	East
			1♣
1♠	2♣	2♥	4♣
4♠			

"You would not bid two hearts? Well, perhaps I wouldn't either, but the question is — how do you feel now?"

Uncomfortable, we decided. After all, our club values looked like wastepaper, and if partner could overcall only one spade on the first round, it did not appear that our hand would be much use to him in four.

"Don't worry," broke in Chagas, "there's more to come. West bids five clubs, and . . ."

That was better. Now our club holding was likely to be worth a trick or so, and a sizeable penalty was in view. "Double!" we chorused, but the implacable Chagas was not finished with us. "East passes," he said, "and South bids five diamonds! West doubles this — now how do you feel?"

It's not often that hardened bridge players feel ill after a perfect lobster thermidor and a bottle of Château Latour, but there were some very unhappy faces around the table. Still, we preferred diamonds to spades, so there was little we could do but pass and hope to move on to more pleasant events. "When five diamonds is passed round to South," continued the Brazilian maestro, "he removes to five spades." Of course, the whole world doubles this to complete a bizarre auction:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	2♥	4♣
4♠	5♣	Dble	Pass
5♦	Dble	Pass	Pass
5♠	Dble	Pass	Pass
Pass			

What did this cost, we wondered — 800, perhaps 1,100? "The trouble with you," Gabriel told us, "is that you have no faith. This was my hand:

♠AKQJ1096532 ♥84 ♦A ♣—

"I wanted to be doubled in five spades, you see, and I was sure that no one would let me play in five diamonds undoubled. So, to convince the defenders that I had some diamond tricks, I bid my singleton ace on the way. As you can see, it all worked perfectly. Would anyone like another Armagnac?"

At last, Gabriel had asked a question to which we all knew the answer!

Golf

Nicholas the great

Elspeth Burnside in Portland

ALISON NICHOLAS held off the challenge from the legendary 40-year-old Nancy Lopez at Pumpkin Ridge last Sunday to become only the second British player — after Laura Davies in 1987 — to win the US Women's Open.

She produced a final-round 71 and pipped Lopez by a shot to claim the $232,500 winner's cheque. Her 10-under-par total of 274 was a US Open record.

Kelly Robbins finished third on 277, seven under par, Australia's Karrie Webb was another shot back in fourth, and Lisa Hackney added to the British celebrations in joint fifth on five under after a 71.

Nicholas, three ahead overnight, set out having to take on not only Lopez but also the partisan crowds. She was apparently unrattled when she birdied the 3rd and then, with Lopez certain to make a birdie after hitting her approach to two feet at the 501-yard 4th, spectacularly holed a 50-yard sand wedge shot for an eagle three.

But Lopez, four times a runner-up but never a winner of the most coveted title in women's golf, hit back on the back nine. She birdied the 13th and 16th and, with Nicholas taking a double bogey after hitting into trouble at the back of the 14th green, closed the gap to one.



Nicholas: drive to victory

The 17th just added to the drama. Nicholas overshot the green and had to settle for a bogey five after getting a free drop from the stands. But, with the door open, Lopez also made five when she bunkered her approach and left her 12-foot par putt a few inches short.

At the par-five 18th, both players made regulation pars. Lopez, closer in three, watched in agony as her putt to force a play-off just slipped by and Nicholas joyfully hugged her caddie Mark Fulcher.

● American golfer Tom Lehman won the Gulfstream World Invitational at Loch Lomond with a superb 19-under-par score of 265. The victory by five shots over South African Ernie Els will give his confidence a big boost as he prepares to defend his Open Championship at Royal Troon later this week.

Cricket Benson & Hedges Cup final



Cup glory . . . the Surrey captain Adam Hollioake holds the cup aloft flanked by his brother Ben and Alec Stewart PHOTO: JOHN PARKIN

Young Ben Hollioake steals the show again

Mike Selvey at Lord's

FOR THE second time this summer Ben Hollioake, not 20 until November, trod the boards of the grandest stage here and gave a compelling performance. In May, on his debut not only for England but at the ground, he batted at No 3 with the uninhibited ebullience of youth and tore the Australia attack to shreds, scoring 63 from 48 balls. Ah, we said, here is a lad with a bit of spark and the temperament to go with it.

He did it again last Saturday, making 98 from 113 balls (that is 161 at a run a ball on his only two appearances at HQ) to put the Benson & Hedges Cup on a gold platter for his big brother and captain, Adam Hollioake.

Surrey, whose recent achievements have been in inverse proportion to the ability in their ranks, finally came good. Stung and humbled by last week's defeat by Nottinghamshire in the NatWest Trophy, they were tightened to a pitch by their shrewd coach Dave Gilbert and by Adam Hollioake, and it was Kent's misfortune to be on the receiving end. In 26 finals Surrey's eight-wicket victory, achieved with five overs to spare, has been bettered only by Somerset's nine-wicket trouncing of Nottinghamshire in 1982.

That was the year that Surrey captured the NatWest — until last season's Sunday triumph, the only trophy to grace their cabinet since they won the Benson & Hedges Cup 23 years ago. For a county of their resources that is almost scandalous, but two trophies in as many seasons represent an upswing in fortune if not the across-the-board dominance they would like.

For Kent, and in particular their captain Steve Marsh and middle-order batsman Graham Cowdrey, it was a harsh day. No team has reached more finals in this competition than Kent's eight, and there was a time in the seventies when Kent could almost be guaranteed to win. The last four finals have been lost, however, and Marsh and Cowdrey played in them all.

This time around, in what promised to be a close game, Kent had built a strong case for themselves by becoming a well-balanced limited-overs outfit who had put one over Surrey on three occasions this season. But when it mattered they failed, unable to recover from the loss of three early wickets in the space of eight balls (although the lbw decisions against Matthew Fleming and Alan Wells looked poor ones). Despite the efforts of Mark Ealham (52) and Nigel Llong (42) they reached only 212 for nine, 50 runs at least from a defensible score against Surrey's batting on a good pitch.

Surrey never gave them a chance. Although the fourth ball of their innings accounted for Alistair Brown, to a stupendous catch by Fleming at point, Ben Hollioake and Alec Stewart put together a second-wicket partnership of 159 and that, bar the shouting, was about it.

If Hollioake stole the thunder once more, Stewart's unbeaten 75 from 124 balls should not be underestimated. Youthful excesses need their counterpoint and this was a top-class innings, played as if by a benevolent uncle content to sit back and watch the youngster strut his stuff. He made only 45 of the partnership but when Hollioake departed Stewart took over, winning the match with a deft flick to fine-leg.

Scoreboard

KENT	
M V Fleming lbw b Lewis	7
M J Walker b Bicknell	6
T R Ward lbw b A J Hollioake	15
A P Wells lbw b Bicknell	6
N J Llong c Butcher b Saqlain	42
M A Ealham c Brown b Lewis	52
G R Cowdrey b Lewis	8
P A Strang b Salisbury	23
*S A Marsh not out	24
M J McCague c Thorpe b Saqlain	0
D W Headley not out	3
Extras (b1, lb7, w17, nb2)	27
Total (for 9, 50 overs)	212

Bowling: Bicknell 8-0-31-2; Lewis 10-3-39-3; A J Hollioake 7-0-31-1; B C Hollioake 6-0-28-0; Saqlain 9-1-33-2; Salisbury 10-0-40-1

SURREY	
A D Brown c Fleming b McCague	2
A J Stewart not out	75
B C Hollioake c Strang b Ealham	98
G P Thorpe not out	17
Extras (lb11, w6, nb6)	23
Total (for 2, 45 overs)	215

Bowling: McCague 8-0-45-1; Headley 10-0-53-0; Fleming 7-1-29-0; Ealham 8-0-31-1; Strang 10-1-31-0; Llong 4-0-15-0

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Success for Sussex

LANCASHIRE, winners of both knock-out competitions last year, were dumped out of the NatWest Trophy in the second round by Sussex, beaten by seven wickets at Hove last week. Lancashire scored 283 for six in their 60 overs with John Crawley finishing unbeaten on 113. But Sussex overhauled that total with more than three overs to spare, opener Keith Greenfield hitting 129, the highest one-day score of his career. In the quarter-finals, to be played next week, Sussex will meet Derbyshire, who triumphed over Northamptonshire (180) by 144 runs. Devon Malcolm took 7 wickets for 35 runs.

Stuart Law struck a brilliant century to steer Essex to a seven-wicket victory over Worcestershire (286-9) at Chelmsford. The Australian all-rounder helped himself to 100 from 91 balls to lay the foundation for a triumph which came with 15 balls remaining. At the Oval, Nottinghamshire (176) beat Surrey by 22 runs in a low-scoring game.

There were also victories for Middlesex over Gloucestershire at Uxbridge, Glamorgan over Hampshire at Southampton and Yorkshire over Leicestershire at Leicester. Also through to the next round are Warwickshire (220) who defeated Somerset by 11 runs.

County cricket championship table

Team	Pts
[illegible]	139
[illegible]	122
[illegible]	119
[illegible]	112
[illegible]	101
[illegible]	100
[illegible]	95
[illegible]	94
[illegible]	94
[illegible]	93
[illegible]	91
[illegible]	86
[illegible]	81
[illegible]	71
[illegible]	68
[illegible]	61
[illegible]	59
[illegible]	51

MIDDLESBROUGH have sold their Brazilian star Juninho to Atletico Madrid for nearly $20 million — the second highest deal involving a British football club, surpassed only by the $25 million that Newcastle United paid Blackburn Rovers for Alan Shearer last summer. Middlesbrough bought Juninho from São Paulo for $8 million in October 1995.

Another footballer on the move was the Swedish international Martin Dahlin, who joined Blackburn Rovers from Roma in a $4 million deal. He was the second Swede to head for Ewood Park. Anders Andersson, the Malmo midfielder signed earlier for $840,000.

Meanwhile Chris Waddle, who won 62 caps for England, kicked off his managerial career by taking charge at Burnley. He succeeds Adrian Heath in a three-year deal with the Lancashire club.

Sheffield United issued a writ and started legal proceedings against Everton and Howard Kendall in an attempt to gain the $1.68 million in compensation they claimed when the manager defected to Goodison Park.

In another development, Michael Knighton announced that he is to step down as Carlisle United's chairman after five years at Brunton Park. He said he will devote more time to writing, including a book about his ill-starred attempted takeover of Manchester United in 1989.

GREG RUSEDSKI clinched a 3-2 victory for Great Britain over the Ukraine in the Davis Cup Euro-African Zone Division One tie at Kiev when he defeated Andrie Rybalko 7-5, 6-3, 6-3. Earlier Rybalko, ranked 350 in the world, fought a marathon with Britain's No 1 Tim Henman for over three hours before going down 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4. Great Britain's third victory came in the doubles when Rusedski and Henman beat Andrie Medvedev and Dimitri Poliakov 6-1, 6-4, 7-6. The win saves Great Britain having to play Hungary in September in a Division One relegation play-off.

ANOTHER fight, another fiasco. The all-British WBC heavyweight clash between Lennox Lewis and Henry Akinwande ended in total chaos at Lake Tahoe, Nevada, when Akinwande was disqualified in the fifth round after being repeatedly warned for holding. The challenger also had his purse withheld pending an inquiry and could lose the full amount under new rules. Lewis had his last fight, against Oliver McCall, stopped in controversial fashion in February when his opponent refused to box and [illegible]

MIKE TYSON [illegible] penalty [illegible] imposed on him with a $3 million fine and indefinite revocation of his licence to box in Nevada. The punishment came 11 days after the American boxer horrified millions watching his heavyweight title fight against Evander Holyfield by biting a chunk out of the champion's ear. Tyson was disqualified when he tried to take a lump out of Holyfield's other ear. He will be able to apply for his licence within a year, but there is no guarantee it will be returned.

THE early stages of this year's Tour de France brought a crop of injuries, incidents and shocks. First, Tony Rominger's distinguished career ended when the Swiss, who finished second in 1993, suffered a broken collarbone after a pile-up. The 36-year-old Swiss will retire at the end of this season after an 11-year career which includes a hat-trick of victories in the Tour of Spain, a win in the Tour of Italy and several one-day classics.

Then the Russian Evgeny Berzin also broke his collarbone in a crash and was out of the race. Another casualty was double stage winner Mario Cipollini, who suffered knee and elbow injuries. Erik Zabel of Germany, who was first across the line on Friday last week, was fined and relegated to last place for high-speed jostling. Then the Belgian Tom Steels was thrown off the Tour for "violent" behaviour, and worse followed when the Uzbek sprinter Djamolidin Abdoujaparov, dubbed the Tashkent Terror, was ejected from the race after a drug test proved positive. On Monday, as the race headed for the mountains, Zabel had a commanding lead in the points competition.